University of Alberta

Reflections of/on Small Town USA: Collective Memory Productions and Disney's 'Celebration' on the Internet

By

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A Note to the Reader:

This thesis was initially fueled by my interest in one particular website, www.celebrationfl.com, devoted to selling homes, shopping, and to the creation of a sense of community in Celebration, Florida. This is the "official" Celebration website maintained by The Celebration Company (TCC), a subsidiary of the Walt Disney Corporation. As I sat in front of my computer screen on an unusually cold fall evening in Edmonton, Alberta (2002), the dissonant image that captured my attention on the homepage for this website was a clip-art picture of a snowman smiling happily upwards as light flakes of snow descended gently onto its head from the dark sky above. The flashing caption underneath the snowman proudly read "Now Snowing Nightly." Celebration is in Florida, an important geographical fact to note, since The Sunshine State is famed for one of the most desirable winter climates in the USA[1]. What, then, could this snowman in Florida possibly mean? Even the coldest winter nights mustn't add up to snow very often, let alone every evening. Nevertheless, there sat the snowman, blinking persistently at me, reminding me not to miss this lovely seasonal attraction featured nightly, on the hour, at 6:00 pm, 7:00 pm, 8:00 pm, and 9:00 pm on Market Street (Celebration's version of 'Main Street USA') during the festive weeks of the 'Christmas season' leading up to New Year's Eve.

What sort of a place, I wondered, would engineer a series of artificial nightly snowfalls in one of the warmest winter climates in North America? This apparent absolute irreverence for the natural dictates of the weather, local seasonal tradition and custom, and perhaps even common sense, surprised and intrigued me.

The snow on Market Street, I eventually discovered (through a closer reading of the official website, and of the press release featured below, in particular), was meant to help put holiday shoppers in the festive (and spending) mood, to encourage visits from curious

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[1] Florida is consistently a choice destination for sunshine-bound 'snowbirds' from less hospitable winter homes, for example.

tourists, and to provide some seasonal entertainment for local families from the community. After all, the logic seemed to suggest, what could be more 'natural' than snow at Christmas time? Well, if you are living in south-central Florida, not much could be less natural. Even as the life-long resident of a frigid Northern climate, I can safely say that the desire to experience a 'white Christmas' is more a romantic ideal propagated and fetishized by seasonal carols, advertising campaigns and television specials, than it is a climatic regularity (even in the 'snowy' north). Given these very cursory considerations, I asked myself: what could possibly be going on here? I leaned in to take a closer look.

"The 'Now Snowing Nightly' campaign at Market Street in Celebration won a top award at this year's International Council of Shopping Centers annual conference. The holiday marketing campaign increased retail sales 40%. 'The idea of snow in Florida appealed to us, to our merchants - and most importantly, it appealed to shoppers. This event supported our merchants by giving customers another reason to visit Market Street at Celebration - and the snow campaign clearly succeeded,' said Matt Kelly, Vice President, Real Estate Development & Operations, The Celebration Company" (celebrationfl.com/press_room991014.htm).

Following the path of snowflakes across 'Market Street' through to the rest of the website I was met with a growing sense that Celebration, whatever it might be, was articulating a very particular, and even prescriptive, narrative about contemporary small town life in the United States. From the descriptions of Celebration as a place that "take[s] the best ideas from the most successful towns of yesterday and the technology of the new millennium" (celebrationfl.com) to the postmodern architectural mélange of the high-design of the downtown center contrasted with the neo-traditionally styled homes in the neighborhoods, I began to realize that I was perusing the sales pitch for a purposefully crafted 'perfect American town.' How this crafting has been accomplished, and what it signals about the way power works in the design of the built environment, opens up the whole portal of inquiry that fuels this project. I was prompted to wonder, for example, what sense to make of Celebration as the creation of corporate Disney in relation to the claim that the town is designed to resonate 'historically' with American cultural memories of life in a pre-1940's Small Town USA. This question got me thinking a little more closely about the inter-workings of capitalism and historical memory; specifically, I wondered: does it even make sense to think about them separately from each other?

As my preliminary investigations of the community broadened and I expanded my search for "Celebration" elsewhere on the Internet I quickly found myself wading

through snowdrifts of random commentaries, paid advertisements, academic critiques, newspaper articles, press releases, Disney fan sites, and chat rooms of all kinds. The path of the few gentle snowflakes I'd been following from celebrationfl.com suddenly became dizzying and disorienting; I found myself caught up in a bit of a blizzard. What follows is an introduction to the thesis project that grew out of my interest in one blinking on-line Floridian snowman, and the questions that have developed out of my closer investigations of Internet representations of Celebration as a result. From the artificial snow on Market Street to the 'traditional community events' that characterize the 'public life' of Celebration, this thesis attempts to unpack some of the stories that circulate about Celebration on-line and investigate the possible consequences they might have for how aspects of 'public life' and 'public spaces' are constructed, negotiated and re-membered in Disney's privatized Small Town USA.

The following section will provide a formal introduction to the project at hand and will attempt to guide the reader through the research questions and methodological process that structure this thesis.

Imagining the Great American Town: Welcome to Celebration

The single family suburban home, purposefully set back from the rest of the community in a beautiful park-like setting, has been a very desirable residential form for the elite classes in North America since the early nineteenth century; recently, as it has become more affordable and accessible thanks to the development of suitable public and private transportation systems, this style of residence has developed into the overwhelming preference for the American middle classes as well (Jackson 1985: 13-20, 157-173). The political and economic climate that developed most remarkably in post-WWII North America initiated an upsurge in suburban expansion changing the patterns of population settlement in uneven ways across the continent. This development, in turn, had an effect on how (and which) residential spaces were landscaped and designed as rapid suburban sprawl proliferated on the fringes of every major North American city. Today, as the majority of Americans (and Canadians) call the suburbs home, considerations about how these spaces are conceived, constructed and regulated becomes an important site of exploration. My broad intellectual interests in the design of urban spaces, regional planning, social life and their relationship to representational practices have coalesced into a project that focuses primarily on Internet representations of 'Celebration,' a planned community developed by the Walt Disney Company on the outskirts of the Orlando metropolitan area.

In the summer of 1996, on a section of its vast land holdings near Walt Disney World, the Disney Company 'opened the doors' to the first newly built homes in a development officially lauded as a pre-1940's style Small Town USA. 'Disney's Celebration USA,' turned 'Celebration USA,' and now known simply as 'Celebration,' is

Disney's highest profile foray into *reality family entertainment*. I write *reality family entertainment* facetiously here, however, because Celebration is indeed a real community where 'regular' people live and not, in fact, the set for an ongoing reality entertainment program (or even an explicit form of 'entertainment' at all, despite the fact that it sits adjacent to 'the happiest place on earth'). Celebration is a 'town' where residents can purchase real estate and are invited to build their homes and lives in an 'old-fashioned' hometown-style community. In the current climate of pervasive reality entertainment programming in the media (particularly on television), however, Celebration's intimate association with one of the largest multinational entertainment companies in the world inevitably invites 'reality entertainment' parallels while also inviting a healthy dose of skepticism about the nature of the 'reality' of the place itself[2]. For example, as Michael Sorkin points out in his chapter "See You in Disneyland" (1992), the development of 'Disney space' (beginning with the first theme park in Anaheim, California) was literally enabled (paid for) by a television program right from its beginning (206).

Putting these ideas aside for the moment, however, it is imperative to point out that 'real' Americans[3] *do*, in fact, live in Celebration and are not transient Disney World tourists, reality TV stars, or paid actors from the Disney studios. The current population of about 8,000 residents in Celebration is projected to grow to about 12,000 once all of

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[2] Life in Celebration has been referred to on the Internet in tandem with *The Truman Show*, a 1998 Paramount Pictures film starring Jim Carrey that plays with ideas about perniciousness of reality television's reach in the search for the 'perfect American town' (see for example, themagicalmouse.com, and telegraph.co.uk/travel/main.jhtml?xml=travel/2000/06/24/etflor24.xml). Notably, *The Truman Show* was filmed in Seaside Florida, the first new urban community, to which Celebration is often architecturally compared.

[3] Americans are indeed the central target market for Celebration. When I looked into being sent an information packet from The Celebration Company the on-line request form 'offered' that info could be sent to countries outside of the USA, but the form required that an American zip-code be used in the mailing address; this meant that I wasn't actually able to have an information packet sent to Canada. This also points to the fact that *only* those with access to *fixed American addresses* can receive information.

the phases of development are complete; the town, in other words, is still currently under construction (celebrationfl.com/press_room/faq). While Celebration itself is not yet fully built, the complete master plan is already sketched out. In other words, the official Celebration website paints a finished picture of community life even if the physical space and its population are still being 'built up.' From the nostalgic descriptions of life in Celebration as reminiscent of the great pre-1940's Small American Town (complete with a 'Main Street' area and 'local community events') to the many artistic portrayals of the community's as-yet-incomplete architectural project, the website sketches and portrays a self-sufficient and 'finished product' with little to no mention of the fact that it is still actively being developed[4].

The official website advertises that Celebration is built upon 'historically grounded' conceptions of small town life for contemporary American families looking for a *safe* and *wholesome* place to live today. Celebration invites people to join a new community that recalls the dreamy and happy hometowns of 'childhood' from the first third of the 20th century, while incorporating all of the technological conveniences of life in the 21st century. Time and space are thus collapsed in the 'official' Celebration narrative as 'childhood' and 'Main Street' are understood to be two parts of the same nostalgic whole. The 'town that Disney built' articulates very particular conceptions of the pre-1940's small town scene in the United States and then applies these selective historical rememberings of 'time' and 'place' to the modern design of Celebration as an

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[4] This presupposes, of course, that a 'final point' of development could, and will, ultimately be reached in Celebration. This appeal to reaching an 'end point' in Celebration's development, I will be arguing, invites the community to be 'read' as a project of modernity. The distinctions between modernity and postmodernity are not always straighforward, complicating the reading of Celebration on primarily modern terms rather than on postmodern ones. While Celebration indeed invites the possibility for postmodern readings I, for the purposes of this project, I have structured my analysis of the community in terms of the

ideal contemporary Small Town USA based on this 'history.' Why the pre-1940's are idealized in particular, who the 'ideal families' invited to live in Celebration are, what type(s) of 'place(s)' the development is modeled after, and which community form is believed to be the ideal, are all pieces of the Celebration-puzzle that reveal elements of Disney's conception of what the contemporary American 'good life' *ought to be* in light of a particular remembering and re-articulation of American historical memories. Because Celebration is a Disney creation (an entertainment empire that is also a pop-cultural powerhouse), the town also reveals, and localizes, larger generalized narratives of 'ideal American life' that carry a broader purchase in contemporary American society as a whole. As such, an analysis of Celebration's self-representation on its official website, as well as some of the many other representations of Celebration available online, provides fruitful places from which to begin thinking about the way particular versions of 'American collective memories' are materially and discursively constituted and negotiated, in general terms, as they are localized in this one specifically 're-created' and 'historically-minded' Small Town USA.

The central research question that guides the many threads of this project is the following: which myths, memories and origin stories of the pre-1940's great American small town are actively engaged and remembered in the creation and maintenance of Celebration? And how are such rememberings and forgettings shaped by, and shaping of, particular erasures and forgettings of other contradictory, undesirable, or dissonant memories that conflict with the picture of community life that Celebration strives to create? Furthermore, how do the ideological underpinnings of these rememberings and

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way the underlying structures of the "planned community" implicated in Celebration's construction resonate deeply as a project of late modernity.

forgettings of 'ideal' small town frame how Celebration is both interpreted and literally put-into-play by Disney and held up as a model of the perfect modern Small Town USA on the American landscape in the 21st century?

Structural and Organizational Considerations

The body of this thesis is organized into two main chapters, each of which draws upon a central guiding theme. The chapters are subdivided into smaller sections, or vignettes, that reflect on different aspects of this theme. Because of the incorporation of many subsections, each chapter is much longer and more detailed than might be expected from a traditional chapter layout. However, in order to explore the two themes I am working with as parallel narratives, this thesis takes on a slightly unusual form in terms of the extended two-chapter format. Part of the reason I divide this thesis up into two main parts is to set the stage for my analysis of the way these two themes are commonly interpreted on dichotomous terms in on-line representations of Celebration. Therefore, while I perhaps risk exacerbating the very dichotomous schism I hope to query in dividing the thesis into two chapters (which, in some sense, invites the reader to imagine the central narratives as running 'against' one another), I do this as a methodological strategy to help crystallize the dichotomous readings that I then strive to challenge in the post-script.

The guiding theme for chapter one concerns the ways in which particular myths of American origin structure Celebration's physical development and facilitate its reception as a 'new community with old fashioned appeal.' Specifically, I take a look at how Celebration, as it is represented in the virtual space of the official website (among

other on-line sites), localizes particular types of origin myths, focusing on the prominence of pioneerism, in the way Celebration is *re-membered* materially and discursively in a brand-new Small Town USA setting. This exploration is motivated by the question: how is Celebration crafted to present and/or promote a 'harkening back' to an idealized historical version of pre-1940's American 'community' and 'tradition'?

The guiding theme for chapter two concerns the ways in which public memories and traditions are negotiated in this privately owned small town, and what effect these memories and traditions might have on the ways citizenship is subsequently conceived of both by residents and by the company in light of the corporate ownership of Celebration. This examination is underscored by the notion that, because Celebration is corporately owned and operated by Walt Disney, this town opens up a portal into thinking specifically about the role that 'private interests' play in the negotiation and structuring of the 'public sphere.' Specifically, I am moved to ask: how does the underlying capitalist imperative to increase profit motivate and frame the way Celebration is styled and organized (and how it signifies as a result)? In other words, in much broader terms, how is it that the capitalist story of America unfolds in Celebration as a story of progress-oriented nostalgia?

The central methodology I will be employing to think through my research questions consists of an analysis of representations of Celebration on the Internet. While the anchoring website I will be working from is the official Celebration website (celebrationfl.com) I will also draw on a variety of other conversations and interpretations of Celebration on-line, including, most notably, the "Celebration Resident's Discussion Forum" (34747.org/forum). My analysis takes note of both

linguistic and visual repetitions as they occur across different sites as well as focusing on the differences between representational strategies - with the aim of drawing out a diversity of Celebration 'story-tellings' as they are produced on-line. The various websites and chatrooms I have encountered during my snowman-inspired Celebration wanderings have revealed many different angles from which to begin thinking about my research questions. Oftentimes these representations of Celebration invite differing/contradictory interpretations of the nature of life in town, what the Disney project is, how this project is best negotiated, with what meanings, and how this project reflects on and/or influences larger collective memories of life in Small Town USA. At other times, reading across multiple sites highlights common threads that may have been imperceptible if one website was consulted in isolation.

Using a variety of on-line sources affords an opportunity for richer analysis but also adds more layers of signification that need to be taken into account simultaneously (which can become a bit messy). As such, this thesis does not attempt to neatly distill all of the possible stories into one tidy self-explanatory narrative about the meaning of Disney's 'Celebration' in American society; such a project would not only be excessively difficult, but likely also deceptive. Rather, I have explored my research questions on two central terms (historical rememberings/forgettings and capitalism) based on the way different kinds of stories are constructed (and represented) about life in town. While making no attempt to try to 'tell every story' I have singled out what I believe to be a few important moments and key issues pertaining to my questions about the place of historical memory with respect to the on-line production and reception[5] of Celebration.

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[5] I am referring, in particular, to the 'reception' of Celebration by town residents (as observed on the Celebration Residents Discussion forum: 34747.org/forum) and through the extensive reading of various

I have decided to focus my attention on Internet websites and chatrooms for three primary reasons: 1) pragmatically, because I do not live in Florida and have no ready access to Celebration, I have to depend on representations of and reports about the community I want to examine - this being the case, I have directed my study towards those representations themselves; 2) analyzing relatively compact websites is also a way of accessing a small and deliberate assortment of images and texts that have been coordinated into a self-contained presentation, which helps both to limit the scope of my research and to provide an accessible portal into the way Celebration is storied in official company literature as well throughout various other on-line sites - it is this process of 'story-telling' that I am most interested in examining; and 3), as a relatively new medium of communication the Internet also seems like an ideal place to locate my inquiries about collective memory productions relative to the role Disney has in shaping these 'memories' in a consumer society.

Celebration is a 'real space,' but it also exists in 'virtual space.' While the so-called 'real space' of Celebration is located in one particular location with distinct geographical bounds the 'virtual space' of Celebration is much harder to pinpoint. There are a few important websites devoted exclusively to Celebration but there are also innumerable other 'virtual moments' where Celebration is 'brought to life' both sporadically and repetitively on the Internet. It is in reading across these many 'moments' that I am able to begin unpacking some of the ways that Celebration signifies and is made meaningful in a broader social context. The project of conducting an analysis of Celebration on-line is not meant to fully explain what the town 'means' on the

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commentaries about Celebration from journalists, students, and other on-line commentators that I will be drawing on throughout the body of this thesis.

physical landscape of Florida and in the lives of the residents who live there, yet my hope is that in illuminating the way Celebration can be read across a number of virtual locations I will be able to start thinking through the ways in which particular concepts of Celebration prevail in a broader cultural milieu. Gillian Rose (2001) writes in *Visual Methodologies*: " [o]ur use of images, our appreciation of certain kinds of imagery, performs a social function as well as an aesthetic one. It says something about who we are and how we want to be seen" (28). Part of the value in thinking closely about 'virtual' representations of the 'real world' is that it allows a glimpse into the way particular myths and discourses are organized into specific narrative forms, whether they be on the landscape of a web-page or a county in the state of Florida. One of the striking strategic similarities between analyzing public life in 'virtual reality' and in the 'real world' is that in both cases there is a necessity to think closely about who the 'author(s)' of any potential space might be, what power and authority the author(s) may or may not be invested with, and how legitimately a particular space might be read/interpreted as a result.

Themes and Objectives

In this thesis I argue that Celebration animates the inseparability of Disney's *capitalist project* as business endeavor and its *historical memory project* of building a pre-1940's town in Celebration. Keeping this in mind, the aims for this project are two-fold. The first aim of this thesis is exploratory. I seek to unpack the ways in which discourses of Celebration are both 'read' and 'produced' on the Internet. My exploration, motivated by the thesis claim above, is structured around separating these

two themes into chapters one and two respectively in order to take a look at 'historical memories' and 'capitalist productions' seperately. Although these themes are artificially forced apart, effecting a significant conceptual splitting for expository purposes in the two chapters (as outlined above), the mutual constitution of 'collective memory productions' and 'capitalist productions' underpins this thesis and will be explored in greater detail in the post-script. In a sense, I break the 'nostalgic ideals' of historical remembrance away from a particular understanding of 'market imperatives,' stilling the meanings of both in order to take a closer look at these discourses, only to put them back into motion together again in the post-script. I do the former in order to think about both how these two ideas are conceived of on dichotomous terms, and the latter to begin conceptualizing how this splitting draws us away from thinking about how collective memory is in fact produced, and made effective, within the dynamics of capital in late-modern society.

The second aim of this thesis, which runs as an undercurrent throughout both chapters and is articulated most fully in the final post-script segment of the thesis, combines my exploration of these two parallel themes with a critical examination of the ways in which they are popularly understood in dichotomous terms. The way Celebration is overwhelmingly read/interpreted posits Celebration as *either* nostalgically reflective of an unabashed American idealism for the future rooted in the 'past' *or* as nothing more than the dubious ploy by a multinational corporation to lend some cultural/social legitimacy (in the form of strategically appealing to this 'American history') to the underlying goal of increasing profit for the company. I argue, rather, that instead of being a simple *either/or* equation that pits the story of American capitalist

motivations and imperatives against a counter-narrative of Celebration as a type of nostalgic remembering of American history, the town is best understood in *both/and* terms. That is, while many critics and proponents of Celebration may indeed focus on one of the two themes outlined above at the expense (or devaluation) of the other, it is most productive, I argue, to think about how memory and the means by which it is produced (for example as it is tied up with capitalist modes of production) are mutually constitutive when considering how Celebration operates, how it signifies, and with what potential effects. I show that every fixing of one story displaces attention to another. To read Celebration solely by means of one term necessarily sets up an obfuscation of other terms by which Celebration is storying itself. For example, to privilege the 'capitalist story' underlying Celebration's development complicates the storying of the ways in which the production and 'selling' of the community are in fact tied up with its appeal to 'the historical,' and vice versa.

This idea is pursued in the second aim of the thesis which, while putting forward an argument in favour of a more nuanced reading of Celebration than dichotomous interpretations afford, does not aim to reach any conclusive 'findings' or to (di)still any final 'meanings.' Instead, I explore the ways in which conversations about Celebration have been structured on dichotomous terms in an attempt to open up a space for alternate ways of reading the community as a town/space that is simultaneously enabled *both* by a particular type of 'American history lesson' *and* by the capitalist narrative of increasing corporate ownership and mediation of 'community space' on the contemporary American landscape. I am arguing that the Celebration project is made meaningful (literally and

ideologically) and, in fact, enabled by the inter-working of both of these narratives and practices.

Chapter one, "Questions of American Origins: Disney and the Construction of Small Town USA," aims both to set the stage for the project as a whole while also beginning to unpack the meaning of Celebration's association with the burgeoning 'new urban' movement in community design and urban planning. This is accomplished by integrating a substantial literature review and providing an analysis of Celebration's physical design in relation to pertinent design theory. While a review of relevant literature will be incorporated with theory and analysis throughout this project, a specific look at the background issues is weighted most heavily in the first chapter. Chapter one serves to introduce Celebration as a designed space, and looks at how, as a planned community influenced by new urbanist design, it is situated in relation to particular American myths of origin. While there are many possible origin stories through which Celebration's appeal to 'historical memory' can be read (in other words, that enable 'historical readings' of dominant American ideologies today), this chapter introduces origin stories that center around frontier mythologies in particular and, specifically, on how discourses of pioneerism have become attached to Celebration's development as a 'new community' in the way it is represented on-line as a historically-minded space (even though the town is only seven years old).

The second chapter, "Public Spaces in the Privatized Town: Tradition and Consumption in Celebration," focuses on specific representations and possible readings of the 'stories' of Celebration featured in a variety of on-line sources. As the chapter title suggests, the role of consumption in community life is central to the way the strict

public/private division is architecturally and discursively negotiated in Celebration; also, an examination of the way citizenship is conceived of is intimately tied to the way consumptive practices are understood in town. This section also takes a closer look at what exactly is meant by Celebration's self-description as a 'town' (something that, by municipal standards, it is not) and at what this particular naming signals both about Celebration and American society as 'consumer preference' and 'designer lifestyles' are increasingly conflated with local democratic structures.

The post-script provides a final layer of analysis, focusing on how I see some of the issues raised fitting together in the project as a whole by pulling together and thinking across the complex storying of Celebration explored in the two-part body of the thesis. The aim here is to provide a re-working of where I have been and an opening-up of some new questions and possibilities that have arisen in the process of this research. This final segment affords me the opportunity to traverse the accumulation of developing storylines and to think further about how they might be read together. Ultimately, in the post-script, this opening-up of the main narratives and the simultaneous putting-back-into-motion of the parallel themes discussed throughout chapters one and two ends up provoking more question-asking than answering.

The Pioneers

Leaving their old homes and lives behind, the pioneers intrepidly venture into Disney's planned community of Celebration. The Celebration pioneers move into what was once a natural swampland, subdividing it with lots of Kentucky blue grass encircled by white picket fences. The pioneers arrive, slowly at first, and then by the thousands, flocking to this new Promised Land; they are new pioneers on a new frontier. They are building a town, a community, a 'sense of place'[4], and they are leaving the 'chaos of the cities,' the 'regretfully conventional' and 'thoughtlessly dysfunctional' suburbs behind. The pioneers are moving in and starting afresh. They are building something brand new, something that wasn't there before, and in the dawning years of the 21st century they are migrating to this small development in south-central Florida from all over the United States. The pioneers aren't arriving on the frontier in covered wagons this time; they arrive instead in lumbering moving vans that glide down the interstate; they arrive in station wagons, SUV's, sports cars, mini-vans, and sedans. The pioneers come equipped with home computers and dining room sets. They come replete with personal portfolios and bank accounts. They come with their pets and their lawnmowers. The pioneers come with optimism and a faith that this new adventure will lead them to a better life. A life "harking back to a time when lemonade stands, not crime, were on every corner" (Wilson, C. 1996: 1). A 'safer' place from the past where the new pioneers can stake out a future.

"Five years ago, with the lucky call of a number, *some 350 people instantly became modern day pioneers*. They became the first residents of Celebration, a community that would become one of the most talked about towns in America – one that would change the foundation of modern day suburbia"[1].

"Many of us *early settlers* had a good laugh when the books came out [*The Celebration Chronicles* and *Celebration USA: Living in Disney's Brave New Town*]… some of the issues were way over-exaggerated"[2].

"Celebration taps into the American *frontier spirit*, the perennial dream of moving on and starting anew, while relocating the frontier in a prelapsarian, and arguably non-existent past"[3].

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[1] "Celebration Marks 5-Year anniversary": Celebration pressroom 30/10/01. www.celebrationfl.com/pressroom/011030, emphasis added.

[2] Chat on: www.34747.org/forum 3/18/03, "Celebration at the Dollar Store," emphasis added.

[3] www.americansc.org.uk/Online/Celebration.htm, emphasis added.

[4] Creating a 'sense of place' is one of the cornerstones of The Celebration Company's 5-fold community philosophy (celebrationfl.com). The 'sense of place' refers to TCC's attempt (as a selling strategy?) to integrate residents into the 'community' of Celebration, and not simply into its 'real estate.'

"Most of the *pioneers* who began to move into this 'new urbanist' community in late 1996 were united by a desire to escape the cheerless isolation of suburbia and to reconnect with their neighbors"[5].

"Typically the buyers [of property in Celebration] are two-income families… The *Celebration pioneers* are joiners, eager to know the way to the Book Club or the Gourmet Club as soon as they move in… The buyers are well-heeled folk moving into or around the Orlando area… Some 25,000 *pilgrims trekked* through a 'parade of homes' promotion this spring"[6].

"…I was a *pioneer*, I had a chance to get into something on the ground floor and make it work – to sacrifice to make it work…" [7].

"I'm a *pioneer resident* and love it here. Moved here [to Celebration] from Atlanta in 1996"[8].

The new American homesteads at Celebration are single-family neo-traditional Victorian houses set on curvilinear streets with car-ports and trash pick-up in the back alleys; they are large southern-inspired 'casa blancas' complete with wide white balconies and faux Iconic-styled columns; they are 'chic' Market Street condos offering the luxuries of modern appliances and pre-wired high speed Internet connections. The Celebration homesteads are erected near the new parks and golf course, and they are built-up around the new downtown center. The pioneers stake their fortunes not on the land, per se, but on the Disney logo, and they put their faith and ambition in the power of real estate. The pioneers are arriving and settling the country, draining the swamp, building a lake, and making the land 'more valuable' in the process of developing it. Through the effort of their adventure, the pioneers are creating their own property values, securing their investments, and protecting their equity with rules and regulations about how the land might be used, further subdivided, inhabited, and decorated. The undeveloped land, purposefully set aside from the construction scheme, becomes 'nature,' a 'greenbelt,' and an 'environmental preserve.' The new lake, created by masterfully engineering the indigenous drainage system of the swampland, becomes 'a view.' The pioneers themselves become the 'community.' The pioneers drive the crocodiles out and they drive the property prices up. The pioneers are settling and taming this wild land.
The pioneers.

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[5] www.sojourn.com.my/contents/2000/07/200007_celebration.html, emphasis added.
[6] www.flahum.org/Forum/Summer_97/edmonds.html, emphasis added.
[7] Excerpt from "Jubilation" in *Playboy Magazine* (Boyle 08/01/03: 73), emphasis added.
[8] Chat: 34747.org./forum 10/28/03, "New? HS Mom Needs Advice."

Chapter 1

Questions of American Origins: Disney and the Construction of Small Town USA

The first half of this thesis will explore questions of American origins and founding myths, focusing specifically on how they interact with the 'new urban' community design of Celebration; this will include taking a look at how particular origin discourses overlay one another and are framed across a variety of websites to begin setting the stage for an analysis of Celebration on 'historical' terms. There are many ways to go about unpacking Celebration's self-styled historical resonance in terms of thinking about the way different origin stories are dominantly remembered in relation to the founding of the United States. For the purposes of this project, however, I focus this chapter more narrowly on the way Celebration can be read as a physical and ideological 'recalling' of frontier narratives. I profile this, in particular, because the narratives of frontierism, and the repetitive reappearance of the word 'pioneer' across a diversity of Celebration related websites singled out this story as one of the dominant discourses by which Celebration is interpreted as a historically resonant community. In reading across a diversity of Internet sources (such as webpages, chatrooms and on-line commentaries) I was struck by the recurrence of the language of 'pioneers,' in particular, both by Celebration residents referring to themselves as such (on the 34747.org/forum community web-board, in particular) and by others in external commentaries about the community.

To begin thinking through the ways in which pioneer/frontier origin stories are mobilized in 'historically oriented' discourses related to Celebration, this chapter integrates, but is not limited to, a substantial literature review of: Neil Smith's (1992)

analysis of the *myth of the frontier* in the American imagination; the development of the Walt Disney Corporation and the ways in which this company has been informed by (and is informative of) discourses of pioneerism; and what 'new urbanism' is - how this design philosophy fits onto what might be described as a *new frontier* in Celebration. This chapter lays the groundwork for thinking about Celebration as a 'historical development.' In particular, I connect the ways in which 'historically oriented' Disney productions (most notably Disney's theme parks) have helped to manage and produce a version of 'American collective memories,' which partially enables Celebration's historical resonance as a broader cultural production. While this chapter narrows in on the way particular discourses of urbanism are articulated in Celebration, I do so with an intention to speak more generally to the ways in which these discourses are themselves constituted by, and put into practice in terms of, Disney-mediated 'historical memories.' As a strategy for navigating my analysis across a variety of Celebration story-tellings, instead of separating my 'literature review' into its own chapter, this paper will integrate discussions of relevant literatures, theory, method, and analysis throughout.

The trajectory of chapter one winds through four descriptive sections culminating in a final section in which I argue that Celebration, while ostensibly 'harking back' to the pre-1940's small American town, produces a certain resonance with contemporary metropolitan environments where urban space is divided up hierarchically based on income, social class, and 'race.' That is, by distinguishing itself as 'other' from the supposed 'metropolitan dysfunction' of the city, the self-narrativization strategies undertaken by The Celebration Company's (TCC) marketing literature on celebrationfl.com actually contribute to producing the discourses of disorder prevalent in

'cities' from which it then seeks to isolate itself. The 'safety' and 'charm' of Celebration only makes sense if the 'danger' and 'dystopia' of the city is reinforced; therefore, while Celebration is touted by Disney and some planning officials[9] as providing a 'solution' to the problems of the city, it in fact adds to a broader conceptualization of the 'problem' through its very self-articulation as a 'solution.'

In beginning to think through these issues, the first section, "Exploring Frontier Mythologies," will incorporate a discussion of Neil Smith's analysis of the 'new city / new frontier' in which he describes how the myth of the American frontier can be read into the gentrification struggles that have taken place (and are still taking place) in the Lower East side of New York City. Smith's discussion of how the myth of the frontier works in the built environment sets the stage for my analysis of Celebration on similar terms. I will draw on Smith's description of the 'new frontier' to situate my argument that the town-like development of Celebration resonates, on both material and discursive levels, with the current trend of urban gentrification in North American cities.

While the first and fifth sections speak most directly to the 'frontier theme' as an important origin myth explored in this chapter, the second, third, and fourth sections provide both some historical background to the issues and some analysis of the ways in which Celebration is represented on-line in relation to the community's 'historical resonance' in broader terms. In section two, "Celebration Florida and the Discourses of Discovery," I take a look at how particular 'discourses of discovery' are understood to have historically played themselves out in the collective imagination in the United States in relation to the way these discourses are poignantly brought to life in Celebration. In

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[9] A discussion of who these 'planning officials' are and how these discourses are contested will follow further on in this chapter.

the same spirit of contextualization, section three, "Disney's Developments," looks at the way the Disney company conceives of its own history as a company and how the Disney narrativization strategy (which we can observe in Disney's many cultural productions) is articulated in Celebration by implication; in other words, I show how the Disney 'story' is both materially and discursively 'brought to life' in Celebration. In section four, "Disney Designs: Pioneerism in Celebration," I begin to unpack Disney's relationship (as an entertainment empire) with popular articulations on-line of Celebration as a type of 'frontier territory' in the way it is described as being populated with new 'pioneers.' Finally, section five, "New Urbanism and the Pioneers of Late Modernity," specifically questions the relationship between the 'new frontier,' as it is articulated by Neil Smith (1992), and the design movement of new urbanism as it is articulated in Disney's town.

Exploring discourses of pioneerism and the American frontier is a productive place to launch into this project on collective memory productions in Celebration not only because 'pioneers' and the 'western frontier' hold such an prominant place in American mythology but also because the title 'pioneer,' when applied to the residents of Celebration, is literally scattered everywhere in academic and popular literatures on the Internet. My aim is to show how a particular myth of American pioneerism, as a historically-minded origin story, is produced and perpetuated through popular on-line characterizations of Celebration as both 'settled' and 'frontier' territory. I will focus on two central issues in order to bring the discourses of this myth at work in Celebration to light. First, as a planned community development 'built from scratch,' Celebration is able to maintain the illusion, and re-tell the story, that the land it was built upon was a barren slate, without history, and that anyone enterprising and bold enough to claim the

space could transform it into something 'worthwhile,' 'saleable,' and 'valuable.' Second, Celebration's frontier mythology (as it is played out on the 'new urban frontier') resonates with the memories and worries of a metropolitan America fraught with problems associated with poverty and racism, including crime, overcrowding, and disenfranchisement. I will explore these layered myths in greater detail while focusing on how it is that Celebration literally re-members these 'American frontiers' in the process of its own story-telling.

Exploring Frontier Mythologies

In his book chapter, " New City, New Frontier: The Lower East Side as Wild, Wild West," Neil Smith (1992) describes how the *myth of the frontier* has permeated the American imagination throughout its history as a nation. This is a myth, he argues, that continues to be re-articulated and perpetuated in different sorts of places and spaces. To set up his argument Smith appeals to Roland Barthes' (1984) analysis of *the myth* (Smith 1992: 69). The myth, Barthes argues, is a type of speech, a form of communication or discourse where the message is carried not in the particular things that are said but in the way they are said, how the messages are themselves conveyed (for example, through the use of metaphors and allusions). In his chapter "Myth Today," Barthes writes: "myth is not defined by the object of its message, but by the way in which it utters this message: there are formal limits to myth, there are no 'substantial' ones" (1984: 109). The myth, in other words, carries a heavier cultural purchase than simply fostering the continual static retelling of a particular event or belief; it slips through multiple cultural moments and milieux and, in the process, provides the mapping for a sort of interpretive meta-

language. Seemingly unrelated histories and events can therefore be read through common discourses of a particular myth. The myth runs through the story-telling process as an (almost) imperceptible current, guiding readings and understandings of what any one story might mean in the context of larger cultural repertoires. Smith adds to Barthes' conception of the myth by pointing out that the greater the separation between events and their constitutive geography or history the greater the power of the mythology will become (1992: 69). That is, the more broadly the myth informs readings of situations that are unrelated to its original referent (in Smith's example, for instance, the 'American frontier' on the Lower East Side), the more deeply embedded and naturalized the myth becomes. One effect of this naturalization is that it becomes more difficult to understand (or to see) the effects and power-relations enabling any particular myth because it is rendered increasingly invisible as it proliferates.

As the story of an event, a history, or a belief moves further away from its attachment to a particular instance and into everyday common sense usage in culture, it is raised to the level of myth. The myth, in turn, provides a key site for the social framings of collective memory. The myth, as a social framing mechanism, reflects, deflects, and hides the underlying dominant ideologies at work in its own construction. So while the myth is not an innocent lens through which the world is understood, it oftentimes appears that way on the surface because this framing allows us to make sense of our surroundings; it prompts us to understand the world in which we live as if it were obvious and neutral when, if we look more closely at the issue, we see that there are much more complicated and invested power relations at work in the production of this supposed 'neutrality.' The myth is carried along by particular knowledge systems and sets of

perspectives, so the understandings of the social world that the myth reproduces are not simply inevitable, or natural, but reflect the interests of those in positions to define the limits of legitimate knowledge; the epistemological influence of myths, in other words, is vested in those people or groups in positions of power and authority. As such, it is extremely important to think about how power works when unpacking the way particular myths shape social remembrances and the way such remembrances effect current social understandings.

Smith looks at a particular instance of how the 'frontier myth' is played out in the gentrification[10] of Alphabet City on the Lower East Side of New York City. He traces frontier discourses in terms of popular descriptions of the 'conquest and capture' of particular land spaces in New York while extending this tracing to the way the myth is metaphorically *embodied* by certain groups of people (65). For example, the description of inhabitants of the contested land on the Lower East Side as 'savage' and 'uncivilized' is contrasted with the much more positive language associated with incoming gentrifiers called 'pioneers' who are praised for their bold American spirit (64-65, 69). One of the conclusions that can be drawn from this analysis, I am arguing, is that as language is embedded in a discourse of national pride and mainstream American history this savage/civilized dualism actually situates some Americans as, in fact, more American than others; as such, their experiences are taken to be representative of American-ness (or the All-American?) while the experiences of the marginalized are discounted and

[10] Gentrification refers to the process by which inner-city or traditionally working class neighborhoods are transformed into middle-class residences as 'locals' are pushed out in the process. In the case of the Lower East Side this socioeconomic differentiation between 'old' and 'new' residents is even more exaggerated as the ever-rising high cost of property creates neighborhoods where it is only upper-middle-class and upper-class residents who can afford to move in as the less affluent classes are displaced.

devalued. For example, in Smith's analysis the *uncivilized residents* of Alphabet City in need of 'cleaning up' are not as American as the *pioneers* who embody the national spirit of rugged individualism and bravery. Keeping this dynamic in mind when exploring the sociopolitical changes affecting the modern urban landscape, Smith writes, "[g]entrification is widely scripted in the media as a struggle to conquer and civilize the urban frontier" (64). The struggle that pits the 'brave pioneers' against the 'uncontrollable/wild frontier' scripts a dichotomy, recalling the genocidal dynamic of European conquest in the Americas, where very real social struggles are simplistically reduced to a battle between 'good and evil,' or between 'man and nature.' A feature of this particular articulation of the frontier myth is that people are pushed into one of two camps; one is *either* a cowboy *or* an Indian, one is *either* civilized *or* savage, one is *either* a part of the problem *or* a part of the solution. Stuart Hall (1996) describes this relationship in terms of a discourse that he calls 'the West and the Rest.' Noting the inherent imbalance of this dichotomy framed in terms of the European colonization, Hall writes:

> …the discourse of "the West and the Rest" could not be innocent because it did not represent an encounter between equals. The Europeans had outsailed, outshot, and outwitted peoples who had no wish to be 'explored,' no need to be 'discovered,' and no desire to be 'exploited.' The Europeans stood, vis-à-vis the Others, in positions of dominant power. This influenced what they saw and how they saw it, as well as what they did not see (204).

The frontier myth, therefore, is enabled by and predicated on a discourse that presupposes an uneven relationship between unequals.

In Smith's example, Tompkins Square Park represents a particularly volatile space where the frontier myth is played out on the geo-political landscape of the Lower East Side. According to Smith, in 1988 an unofficial war broke out between the NYPD

and locals over an ongoing gentrification struggle; the 'problematic people' to be driven out (who Smith identifies as being interpreted in popular discourse as the 'wild Indians' in the brand of frontier discourse invoked to make sense of inner city gentrification in this instance) were the loitering punks, homeless people, teenagers, neo-hippies, drug dealers and users, and many other 'objectionable' park users (61-68). The spaces under siege by the police and municipal government were the square itself and the bordering city blocks that rich New Yorkers were slowly beginning to condo-ize (61-68). Tompkins Square was symbolically potent in this struggle because it formed a part of the dangerous borderland running along the periphery of the colonized (gentrified) space, and it was described by many (the gentrifiers, the police, and the media alike) as the *wild frontier* of Alphabet City. Smith writes:

> The social meaning of gentrification is increasingly constructed through the vocabulary of the frontier myth. This appropriation of language and landscape – the new city as new frontier – seems at first playfully innocent, and in many cases so common as to be wholly unremarkable. Newspapers habitually extol the courage of urban homesteaders, the adventurous spirit and rugged individualism of the new settlers, brave pioneers, presumably going where no (white) man has ever gone before (69).

The urban spaces that have historically been abandoned to people living in poverty, ethnic minorities, immigrants and other social outsiders (like artists, activists, and queer communities[11]), as the wealthier classes moved out of the city and into the

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[11] Interestingly, while queer communities have traditionally been spatially marginalized there is also a tension here because oftentimes upwardly mobile gays and lesbians actually contribute to the very process of gentrification that drives out lower income folks (queer and straight alike). In the March-April 2004 film schedule for the *Coolidge Corner Theater* (Boston, MA) a review for an upcoming film called *Flag Wars* reads: "The pain and politics of gentrification where wealthy (and predominantly white) home buyers move into aging and economically depressed areas, is a hot topic across the country (not the least of all in Boston's own South End). But perhaps the most intriguing aspect is that two historically oppressed groups – the black and gay communities - are now often at odds in this battle for housing. FLAG WARS explores the complexity of gentrification over four years in a neighborhood of Columbus, Ohio. It examines the relationship between housing, heritage, and public policy, as well as the contradictions between intention and result, for a powerful study that literally hits people where they live" (4). What this example points to

suburbs throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, are suddenly being rediscovered as 'valuable' once again (Smith: 64). Smith notes that gentrification reverses the trend of the outward moving flow of people and resources to the suburbs, effecting an unprecedented pressure to secure valuable spaces/homes for the elite in areas that have historically been neglected and undesirable. He writes:

> Gentrification represents a geographical, economic, and cultural reversal of postwar urban decline and abandonment. Conceptualized by apologists in the spurious neutral language of "revitalization," gentrification has remade SoHo and the Upper West Side and even affected such unlikely Manhattan neighborhoods as Harlem and Hell's Kitchen (64).

Areas that were at one time prevailingly considered 'deplorable slums' (by those in positions of power to do the labeling, that is) are today slowly being *rediscovered* as 'historic neighborhoods,' just as run-down tenement buildings that once housed the working poor are suddenly being *remembered* as 'classic brownstones' in need of renovation and recovery (Smith: 75). It is by employing this language of rediscovery, remembrance and reclamation, in tandem with the frontier myth that invokes European colonization, that urban renewal projects are sold back to a willing (and well-heeled) bourgeois buying-public.

The idea that buildings and spaces need to be 'recovered' oftentimes forgets the lived histories of these territories. To refurbish something old, to recover its lost glory, is to attempt to return something to the thing it once was. But this language simply does not make sense when applied to items (and spaces) that never actually bore the history to which they are being returned, or that bore a multiplicity of histories that can not simplistically be reduced to a singular narrative. As Smith pointedly remarks,

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is that sexuality, among other social identities complicated by issues of ethnicity and socioeconomic status, obscuring any straightforward (or simplistic) analysis of 'aggressors' and 'victims' of gentrification.

"gentrification portends class conquest of the new city. Urban pioneers seek to scrub the city clean of its working class geography and history. By remaking the geography of the city they rewrite its social history as a justification for its future" (89). City spaces are not necessarily returned to their previous histories in urban renewal projects that seek to make space for the inward moving elite; rather, the very real histories of particular spaces and places deemed to be problematic, or to conflict with contemporary understandings of what would be 'best for the space' (although not necessarily 'best' for all the people who live there), are systematically erased.

The pressure of 'urban renewal' is felt most acutely, often, by the displaceable folks who make up the fabric of the frontier to be 'won.' Those who are forcibly 'settled' and 'tamed' are oftentimes powerless in the face of this new crunch for real estate, and, as Smith describes in Alphabet City, resistance by unwanted residents tends to be met by reprisals from the police, the burden of rising rents, and new municipal bylaws and rules designed to exclude them. The 'recolonization' of the city necessarily requires the strategic displacement of particular undesirable residents (Smith: 90). Smith writes, " 'The homeless' are more accurately described as 'the evicted,' since people don't usually fall out of the housing market – they are usually pushed" (91). Meanwhile, the brave 'urban pioneers,' as they are popularly called, set up their homes in the newly 'recovered' territories of New York City. In an ultimate irony, Smith points out that there is a real cultural cachet, and glamour, associated with living in a place spiced with a sense of adventure and risk (the very 'spice' of which is added by those people who are threatened with eviction in the process) (75). "Frontier danger," Smith writes, "is the counterpoint of romance" (76).

Living in the urban core has a sex appeal on which wealthy Americans can capitalize on and simultaneously 'sanitize' for the safe(r) consumption by future migrants to gentrified spaces. The pioneers thus participate in 'cashing in' on the sexiness of living in vibrant/diverse communities while, ironically, 'cleansing them' of the very people and life that contributed to making them appealing in the first place[12]. Furthermore, for those pioneers willing to undertake the challenge, being on the frontlines of gentrification is also a savvy financial move because real estate prices (and resale values) inevitably go up as a particular location becomes settled by more 'respectable folk.' The pioneers are therefore able to benefit on two accounts: they are, according to the American origin myth that celebrates European colonization, lauded as cultural heroes for undertaking the quintessential American project of settling a 'new and dangerous place' and they are also in the fortunate position of being able to financially capitalize on their willingness to suffer the trials of living in a potentially volatile borderland.

Smith argues that the frontier myth, as the dominant positively framed narrative of colonization, permeates all manner of social and cultural institutions as well as physical landscapes and people themselves. In late modernity this myth runs particularly forcefully through the discourses of 'urban renewal' and 'urban decay' with respect to gentrification projects. Although 'decay' itself is very often the result of racist and classist housing and land development practices, the 'decay' of neighborhoods tends to

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[12] Smith points out that art communities often unwittingly participate in the gentrification process. The way this works, he says, is that communities of artists are often attracted by the lower rents of poorer areas where they can affordably set up galleries and studios. However, in the process, artists end up adding to the general appeal of the area to "outsiders' thereby setting the stage for a process of gentrification that will likely have the effect of driving them out (due to the cycle of rising rents that comes along with gentrification) (79-89).

be blamed on the people who live there, and is often interpreted as proving that people living in 'decaying' neighborhoods are themselves 'decayed' (morally and physically), which willfully ignores the fact that that (American) federal housing development institutions such as the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) and later the Federal Housing Association (FHA) have historically not provided mortgage insurance in neighborhoods considered to be 'high risk,' where 'high risk' was used as a code-word to signify African American and immigrant communities (Jackson 1985: 208-209). This meant that new homes could not be affordably built in many established areas of the city (pushing new home expansion outwards towards the suburbs), nor could costlier home repairs be undertaken on existing properties. This had the effect of perpetuating a self-fulfilling prophecy since, due to institutionalized neglect, 'high risk' neighborhoods inevitably *did* become the slums they were predicted to turn into (Jackson 1985: 219-230). Furthermore, as Jackson (1985) points out, before the 1948 Supreme Court ruling that deemed racially exclusionary homeowners covenants and mortgage loaning practices as racist, and hence unconstitutional, any neighborhood with African Americans living in it would automatically be labeled a 'high risk area' (208). Jackson writes: "in a March 1939 map of Brooklyn, for example, the presence of a single non-white family on any block was sufficient to mark that entire block black" (209). This, he argues, compounded the growing problem of the ghettoization of the urban poor in run-down neighborhoods and sped the already burgeoning process of *white flight* to the suburbs and geographic racial segregation within American cities themselves throughout the twentieth century (191-230).

The proliferation of slums based on these historical practices, Jackson notes, continues to be used to justify racist beliefs that neighborhoods with immigrants, minorities, and people living in poverty could be no other way (129-130). Furthermore, the 'bodies' of decaying neighborhoods are ideologically transferred onto the bodies of inhabitants themselves; these people, then, these 'new savages' of the frontier myth, are understood to be incapable of living otherwise. The marginalized are therefore ignored and dismissed as being either 'stupid' or 'lazy' and left to sort out the *mess* of their under-funded neighborhoods by themselves or, alternatively, to become wards of the state, subjects of paternalistic government interventions. Jackson writes:

> in the mind of the average citizen, the failures of public housing were due to cultural characteristics of the poor themselves, who were seen to be resisting improvement. If government-assisted shelter – a free ride in the view of many citizens – failed to alleviate the characteristics of poverty, then the poor had only themselves to blame. In this sense, public housing was similar to other "poverty programs," which assumed that poverty could be eliminated simply by altering one aspect of the life of the poor (229).

Starting in 1933 under the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt, the Public Works Administration (PWA) authorized its Housing Division to tear down 'slums' and replace them with federal housing projects (Jackson: 221). While the intentions were certainly good (on some level) - the idea was to try to provide every family in America with a decent home – housing projects (now called simply 'the projects') had the effect of isolating people living in poverty from the larger community and institutionalizing low standards of living for many. As Jackson notes, "public housing might still be described as federally built and supported slums" (229).

Frontier mythology in the contemporary built environment, then, resonates both with the memories of the 'old frontier' history of the American landscape (the colonialization and 'taming' of the *wild west* by cowboys of European descent), and also

with the 'new frontier' history of the ghettoization and gentrification of the urban United States. Obviously the myth of the frontier recalling the colonial push westward in the 18th and 19th centuries informs the reading of city gentrification as *frontier* (this is how the myth works), but I think it is interesting and productive to think separately about these two frontiers to help untangle some of the cultural memories that are invoked in popular descriptions of Celebration, on the internet and elsewhere, as open to pioneers of all kinds. The following sections will extend Smith's analysis of the 'new city as new frontier,' characterized by the gentrification on the Lower East Side, to help frame the argument that Celebration, as a new urban design, materially draws on (and discursively re-inscribes) particular historical memories of the frontier myth in its own construction.

Celebration Florida and the Discourses of Discovery

> Disney's hard-sell promotion materials on Celebration boast that it is doing what "no one has done before." New towns are, of course, old news in America, so the building of a town from the bare ground up cannot be the story here. *Indeed all of America's towns and cities were at some point 'new towns' built on virgin territory in a 'second Eden'* (Barber 1997 in *FORUM Magazine*, flahum.org/Forum/Summer_97/Barber.html, emphasis added).

The notion that what is now defined as the United States was once an empty 'virgin territory' waiting patiently to be discovered by the resource-strapped, disgruntled, overcrowded, and stiflingly class-stratified Europeans looking for a better life has been hotly contested by North American Native peoples, social activists, and scholars alike[13]. Nevertheless, the origin myth that America simply *did not exist* before European settlement, that it was literally 'found' in a happy accident by Christopher Columbus and his crew in 1492, has prevailed. Along with this particular origin myth, that is, that

nothing predated the European arrival in North America, comes a considerable amount of cultural baggage, not the least of which is an institutionalized racism so embedded that the systematic annihilation of the Indigenous peoples of this continent has come to be written-off as inevitable and largely understood to be without any major consequence (McMaster and Martin 1992).

Before we even get started, then, the quagmire of the politics of colonialization has been opened up, and with it the enlightenment knowledge systems that enable a sense-making of such practices in the first place[14]. To buy into the origin myth that North America was a "second Eden" (Barber 1997) seductively waiting to be discovered like a submissive virgin bride, is to buy into a whole discourse of patriarchal colonialism lock, stock, and barrel[15]. Given even these, admittedly superficial, gestures toward the legacy of the colonial history of North America, then, it would seem that any attempt to reproduce the logic of the frontier is underpinned by this history (Hall 1996). This being the case, a shifting genealogy of cultural prejudices has literally been engraved into the landscape as it has been homesteaded, cultivated, metropolitanized, and subdivided for suburban expansion[16]. The origin myth of the positively framed 'discovery of the new world' serves to reify social differences in a way that legitimates social inequalities.

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[13] See for example: *Indigena: Contemporary Native Perspectives* by McMaster and Martin (1992); and "The West and the Rest" by Hall (1996).

[14] The epistemology of modernity is linked to a belief in the perfectibility of the social world, and an ability to rationally understand and manipulate it through planned interventions and standardization (Bullock and Trombley 2000: 540).

[15] The misogynistic imagery offered here is not accidental nor should it be brushed aside as inconsequential. It carries with it a considerable ideological weight that serves to highlight the depth of patriarchal knowledge systems inherent in modernist discourse generally.

[16] But where does this leave us now? How might we proceed differently given this history? How might an ethics of urban planning be conceptualized? Though beyond the scope of this inquiry, such questions are prompted by it nonetheless.

It is certainly impossible to ignore the violent beginnings of colonial North American history, but the way this violence is remembered points to the way cultural memories are constructed and shaped institutionally and hegemonically, and contingent on social forces and systems[17]. It is not the extent of certain violences that necessarily 'causes' them to be remembered in particular ways (for example, that exceptionally 'atrocious' historical events are remembered as such simply because they are 'atrocious'), but the ways in which events are framed (for memory or forgetting) affects collective memories of these past events. For example, in his chapter "The Social Frames of Memory" David Gross writes:

> If social memories are preserved and remain active over a long period of time, it is because particular traditions or particular institutional carriers have made it possible, not because there is some alleged collective psyche at work recalling by its own agency what individuals should otherwise forget (2000: 78).

Gross argues that the ways in which these traditions and institutional carriers frame memories are not neutral or disinterested, but reflect particular interpretations of the social world that provide a framework for the ways in which events will be culturally remembered; this is important to the way individuals come to understand historical events because "in adopting the schemata provided by society at large, one simultaneously adopts the biases and interpretations built into them" (Gross 2000: 80). It is also important to note, as Gross articulates in the indented quotation highlighted above, that remembering and forgetting are not simply features of unpredictable human cognitive capacities but are both socially molded and institutionally reinforced. For example, in the case of the colonization of the 'new world,' the fact that thousands of indigenous peoples

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[17] For a broader discussion of how violence is culturally mediated and remembered/forgotten see for example, *Beyond Hope and Despair* edited by R. I. Simon, S. Rosenberg and C. Eppert (2000).

were murdered, displaced, and robbed of their land during the conquest of the *wild west* is not prevailingly remembered; instead, we are invited to remember is to recall a fortuitous 'discovery,' something that ought to be celebrated by the North American population as a whole (Mackey 2002: 91-106). It is not that the Indigenous peoples who suffered at the hands of European colonizers were any less the victims of state sanctioned violence than other groups who we memorialize or worry about today (a recent example of this would be the international reaction to, and mobilization against, the egregious treatment of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo during the 1990's), but the knowledge of the harm caused by the colonization gets displaced by the positive framings of the 'discovery of the new world' reflecting the interests of those with the most power to define what will be remembered and how.

As an example of how similar cultural events can be remembered differently I draw your attention to a contrast between the ways Columbus' 'discovery' has been framed on two different terms. On the 500th anniversary of Columbus' 'discovery' of the Americas in 1992 there were celebrations held throughout the continents (North, Central and South) to positively mark this year as significant. In contrast, many Indigenous peoples marked this anniversary differently; instaed of being a time for celebration the 500th anniversary was instead marked, as McMaster and Martin (1992) note, as a time for Indigenous peoples to take stock of the consequences that colonization has had on their cultures. In describing alternate forms of remembrance McMaster and Martin (1992) note that there has been an ongoing embedded forgetting in institutionally supported celebrations such as the 500th anniversary 'celebration' of Columbus' arrival. These celebratory memories systematically forget the violent history of 500 years of

colonization and oppression suffered by Indigenous peoples at the hands of Europeans. McMaster and Martin write:

> [r]eferences to the "New World," and the "pagan," "primitive" and "savage" peoples found here clearly support European hegemony. The word "Indian" is an inaccurate term used as a consequence of a navigational error by Columbus who refused to believe that he was not in the East Indies. The term "Indian" represents the "dread and desire of a colonizing population who were unable to recognize cultural differences except through their own preexisting conception" (16).

As the authors point out here, even the terms – "Indian" and "New World" - used to describe the ways in which this process took place (a process of colonization that *continues* to take place throughout the Americas on many different levels today) is marked by those with the power to negotiate how language is used and legitimized, affecting what particular words come to signify as a result. This points to the way certain violences are not only officially 'unremembered' (or 'forgotten') but to the fact that 'remembering otherwise' may itself be extremely difficult given the language we have at our disposal to constitute and express it. Remembering and forgetting are shaped by the very communication systems we depend on to engage with this process of recollection in the first place. Rather than simply being oppositional terms, then, remembering and forgetting are bound together, enabled and disabled by language-games that are negotiated through common workings of power. We remember and forget simultaneously; to remember the 500th anniversary of Columbus' arrival as a happy day worth celebrating is to simultaneously forget that for Indigenous peoples this contact initiated the devastating process of European colonization. Forgettings, therefore, cannot simply be conceived of as accidental omissions: as Iwona Irwin-Zarecka (1994) argues, "the absence of memory is just as socially constructed as memory itself, and with an equally strong intervention of morally as well as ideologically grounded claims to truth" (116). As such, it is just as important to query what has been socially forgotten as it is to

think about what has been remembered and why. Irwin-Zarecka goes on to say, "it is the absences within collective memory that can tell us a great deal about the workings of power and hegemony" (199). The way language is used to produce and engage collective memories both highlights and masks these workings of power. The origin myth that posits the Americas as 'empty' and therefore available for 'discovery' informs the contemporary reading of landscapes (such as Celebration, Florida) as 'virgin frontier' territory, situating present-day social struggles within a broader discourse of (mis)speakings and (mis)rememberings.

There are at least two origin myths that need to be taken into account simultaneously when beginning to unpack how Celebration is produced 'historically.' First, in relation to the 'new frontier' that Smith (1992) describes with respect to Alphabet city in New York, there is a re-articulation of a 'frontier discourse' recalling the genocidal tendency of colonization in the way that 'undesirable inhabitants' are understood to be systematically excluded (by design) from spaces that are coveted by those in positions of power. Secondly, the origin myth that posits the discovery of the Americas as a 'new Eden' - free for the taking - is also animated in planning discourses that laud developers for their 'ingenious' use of otherwise 'barren' land.

Moving into the larger conceptual project at hand in this thesis, it is important to note that the history of Celebration, and the way Celebration waxes historical, begins, of course, in relationship to particular framings and rememberings of these myths. The origin myths of 'discovery' and of 'colonization' inform the way Celebration's story unfolds and the way it is interpreted, and functions, as a planned community. While remaining attentive to the frontier history of North America we will jump ahead a few

hundred years, now, to the history of Disney, both the man for whom it is named and the multinational entertainment empire that we have come to know, love, and loathe today. The way the Disney Corporation recalls its own history, and the way this history is re-told and re-modeled in Celebration, is a telling place to begin. Another important American origin myth to consider is the idea that single individuals or small groups of pioneers bravely undertook the project of 'taming' the vast American continent all by themselves. A particular brand of American individualism that praises the lone hero struggling to make good is where our Disney story begins (and also, notably, where most of Disney's fictionalized cartoon story-lines begin).

Disney's Developments

The 'official history' of the Disney Company begins with one man, Walt himself, who is said to have had a *vision* of bringing high quality family entertainment to the American public; the American Dream of rising to the top through hard work and ingenuity forms the backbone of the fabled story line for the birth of the Disney Empire (Wasko 2001: 2-15). Two brothers, Walt and Roy Disney, started their company in Hollywood together in the 1920's in a small entrepreneurial venture that would see Walt taking the front-man position as the spokesperson (and mascot?) for the wildly successful Disney phenomenon. As legend would have it, the Disney brothers and their siblings grew up in poverty, but became successful nonetheless by overcoming adversities from childhood, taking personal risks, striving to succeed in their dreams and following their inspirations[18]. It is Walt Disney's *personal* achievements as an individual man, however,

[18] All of these qualities make up essential components of Disney plot lines, which Janet Wasko (2001), refers to as 'Classic Disney.' Anyone from the humblest mouse to the ruler of an underwater or savannah

that have become synonymous with Disney's success as a corporation (2). Emphasis on the legend of Walt Disney as an individual champion and genius, centering on his rise from obscurity to success (with the help of his beloved characters 'Mickey and Friends'), has become a favorite tale for Disney fans worldwide (7). Despite the active involvement of his brother and his growing staff of animators (who are actually said to have created everything after about 1926), Walt Disney is praised unanimously as a lone hero, perpetuating a 'great man' version of history (6-7).

Later on in his life (and career) Disney had an inspiration to build his own city free from crime, poverty, unemployment, and other 'social problems,' [19] which he understood to be plaguing the modern urban experience. According to Alexander Wilson (1994), Walt Disney's final life ambition was to build an ultra-modern *real* city within a theme park (including a glassed-in weather dome); Disney's goal was to create a utopian 'city of tomorrow,' a community of fun, safety, technology, and consumerism. Wilson notes that in Walt Disney's musings for EPCOT (Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow), he intended to build a new project built entirely from scratch for which there was a final goal (118). Explaining his vision in 1966, Walt said:

> EPCOT will be an experimental city that would [sic] incorporate the best ideas of industry, government, and academia worldwide, *a city that caters to people as a service*

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kingdom can become a hero in Disney's adventures, and all sorts of different characters have done so, provided that they exhibit certain important and common characteristics. Disney's film division has a reputation for taking classic stories of all kinds and sanitizing them through the imposition of formulaic plot-lines that see good triumphing over evil, creativity lavishly rewarded, and romance and happiness featured as the ultimate pay-offs for a job well done (117-118). Disney's protagonists push these plot lines along as they bravely, and playfully, overcome their many adversaries and sticky situations. Wasko writes, "while Disney may not have been alone in reinforcing these values in the popular cultural sphere, the characters and stories represented in Classic Disney provide unmistakable models for a dominant all-American ideology" (117).

[19] The language of 'social problems' brings to mind a set of issues (such as street crime, for example) that may pose a problem for a certain elite segment of society - those with the power to define problems as such. As a result some 'problems' are privileged over others in so far as they are constituted as such in the first place. While street prostitution might be considered to be a 'social' problem in this understanding, for example, domestic violence might not.

> *function*. It will be a planned, controlled community; a showcase for American industry and research, schools, cultural and educational opportunities. In EPCOT there will be no slum areas because we won't let them develop. There will be no landowners and therefore no voting control. People will rent houses instead of buying them, and at modest rentals. There will be no retirees; everyone must be employed. One of the requirements is that people who live in EPCOT must help keep it alive (quoted in Wilson: 183, emphasis added).

Disney imagined a community with a central consumer core surrounded by a series of housing complexes and suburban-style neighborhoods.

Rejecting pesky government interventions, and the messiness of democratically run public space, Disney aimed to undertake the EPCOT project as solo designer, an American capitalist and individual entrepreneur. Disney believed that the 'problems of the city' could be 'civilized' through the regulation of urban life; and he believed, to a certain extent at least, that social life could be engineered on a physical level:

> Walt's commitment to environmental control continues with the company today. An article written by a Disney representative reveals the company's objectives: "We believe that to the degree that an environment can be controlled, the appropriate reactions of the people within that environment can be predicted. Disney strives to control, within good business sense, much of the environment" (Terry Brinkotter, "Service Disney Style," *Executive Excellence* 10 no. 8 (August 1993): 3-5; quoted in Chung 2001: 282).

Part of the motivation behind purchasing the vast tracts of land in Florida that later became the Disney World complex (and the current home of Celebration) was to set the stage for the development of EPCOT. While the 'real' Walt Disney died several decades ago (December 15th 1966) (Chung: 284), and had nothing to do with the actual creation and development of Celebration, the myth of the man and the myth of his vision is a story that helps to make sense of the town and its potential meanings.

> "The 'Florida Project' today is a multi-billion dollar resort and themepark complex. It's a great place to visit but bears almost no resemblance to Walt's Florida Project. Celebration was a way to get rid of some 'unusable land' in what was thought to be the most profitable manner… If Walt dreamed of a vibrant, active, caring community made up of some of the most intelligent, thoughtful, and committed people in the world, then part of his dream came true… because the residents, not the company, made it so" (chat: 34747.org/forum, 08/05/03, "Research Paper").

Upon Disney's death, the plan for EPCOT changed dramatically; instead of becoming a real city it opened as a theme park in 1982 (Chung 2001). The 'town' called Celebration that was built on the outskirts of Disney's property in Florida over twenty years later 'remembers,' in many important ways, Walt's aspiration of setting a moral/technological standard in city-living for the rest of America and the world. On the new frontier of the American urban landscape, Celebration, taking the place of EPCOT as the Disney experiment in late modern urban-American design, can be read as a pioneering venture into new forms of community living and urban planning in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

Disney Designs: Pioneerism in Celebration

In "On Line Opinion," a not-for-profit Internet magazine (onlineopinion.com), the current president of The Celebration Company (TCC), Perry Reader, had this to say:

> At the Disney organization we are about entertaining people. It's about story-telling. The essence of the Walt Disney Company is the ability to tell stories through movies and theme parks. The stories of birth, death, graduation, being together on Saturday night – *these are the memories that we all relate to.*
>
> We [the Disney Corporation] had a piece of property in Florida and we decided to create a new idea about development using our knowledge about how people react. *We were talking about a green field that had no story – it was a cattle pasture.* The site for Celebration is in the southwest corner of Orlando, near Walt Disney World.
>
> We created the town center around a lake. We made a decision that the town center was essential to what community related to… We assembled a powerful team of people. We studied great communities… We modeled those entire towns and created a pattern book in three dimensions… We found architecture that people related to. It mainly came from the 1940s (onlineopinion.com.au/2001/May01/Reader.htm, emphasis added).

Reader, an officially recognized spokesperson for TCC, reveals many interesting things about what Celebration is trying to accomplish and how it has undertaken to do so. Note, first, Reader's assertion that the land Celebration was built upon was without a history

(or, as he puts it, without a *story*). The fact that Reader notes that the land was once a cattle pasture indicates that Celebration (at least partially) sits atop somebody's old farm. This is an important point. In its quest for real estate in Florida the Disney Company covertly bought up adjoining parcels of land, bit by bit from farmers, in order to keep the prices below their true market value. As Chung points out:

> In a cunning ploy to secure vast acreage and keep prices low, in the spring of 1964 Walt's agents quietly buy parcels of land under the names of five different corporations. In October 1965 the *Orlando Sentinel* publishes a headline that declares, "We Say: Mystery Industry is Disney." At this point 27,000 acres have been acquired, at a cost of only $200 an acre (Chung 2001: 282).

Farmers were consequently cheated out of the fair price they ought to have received for their land, but the farmers who once lived there are not remembered in Reader's tale; only their grazing 'storyless' cattle are. The central idea put forward by Reader in the quotation given above is that the land was empty, it was worthless scrubland/grazeland/swampland, and as such, it *practically invited condo-ization* by entrepreneurial folk like Disney and the Celebration pioneers. What we see if we peer a little more closely at the issue is that the land does, of course, have its own history, and far from being 'empty' and 'worthless' the land was used for another purpose entirely (namely agriculture) as recently as the 1960's. Ignoring this issue (or forgetting this history, to put it another way), however, Reader asserts that it is thanks to TCC and of course to Disney, that the land has finally been transformed into something valuable. But how is 'value' defined, by whom, and to what ends?

Disney indeed excels at 'creating stories' (as Reader points out), but rather than simply telling stories where no previous ones existed, Disney's story-telling often displaces other competing/contradictory narratives and memories. It is this particular brand of Disney story-telling that Henry Giroux (1999) probelmatizes in his book *The*

Mouse That Roared. While Reader confidently proclaims that Disney tells the stories that invoke the "memories that we can all relate to" (onlineopinion.com.au/2001/May01/Reader.htm), Giroux, on the other hand, would likely argue that the "we" in this statement refers primarily to the white, heteronormative American middle-class. Speaking to this larger tendency in Disney productions, he writes:

> The strategies of escapism, historical forgetting, and repressive pedagogy in Disney's books, records, theme parks, movies, and TV programs produce identifications that define the United States as white, suburban, middle class, and heterosexual (Giroux: 127)

Giroux notes that these selective messages can have especially coercive effects on children who are constantly invited to enter into Disney's omnipresent magical worlds, and for parents who believe that Disney is the great social equalizer where everyone is invited to have the same kind of fun (5-7). In addition to re-writing histories about other cultures and geographical landscapes (so they conform to American definitions of success and failure, re-inscribing current social stereotypes in the United States), Giroux argues:

> Disney's writing of public memory also aggressively constructs a monolithic notion of national identity that treats subordinate groups as either exotic or irrelevant to American history, simultaneously marketing differences within "histories that corporations can live with" (109).

The pedagogical consequences of an appeal to 'common-sense memories' in Celebration (such as those asserted by Reader) are therefore quite profound. While Disney officially claims only to be promoting fantasy worlds of imagination and creativity, Disney story-telling contains pointed morals about how society should unfold. The power and effectiveness of this moralizing is strengthened by the strong cultural legitimacy Disney enjoys as a purveyor of children's entertainment (Giroux 1999). Just as the formulaic Disney story-lines tell the same tales of adventure and romance over and over again so

too do they tell a predictable story of the past, present, and future. Disney paints a technologically deterministic view of progress that sees citizens in terms of their consumer power and envisions industry playing an increasingly important role in the daily operation of peoples lives[20] (Chung 2001; Giroux 1999; Wilson 1994). In a sense, the future is already written, and it is one where the 'good guys' will be rewarded and 'evil' punished in Classic Disney form.

The past is read as a justification for the future. For example, if there have been historical inequities vis-à-vis Indigenous peoples here in North America this is understood simply as an inevitable feature of 'progress.' This appeal to 'progress' ignores how power is negotiated in uneven ways, and privileges a particular vision of the good life, as well as the good citizen. On Main Street USA (or 'Market Street' in Celebration) Disney does little to address issues of social inequality or historical prejudice. In fact, it perpetuates the *danger of the other* in an attempt to create solutions for that very 'problem' – solutions that only Disney can provide, and which come at a cost[21]. Telling the story of an 'idyllic past' (which TCC claims that Celebration is modeled after) implies, by contrast, that the present (or the problematic urban-core at least) is somehow more hazardous. It is through constant repetition across Celebration's marketing literature on the official website that Celebration is 'safe,' that the 'danger' of the city becomes reified. The following quote found on the main page of the official website, for example, prominently emphasizes small town neighborliness that would

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[20] Chung (2001) writes: "Architectural historian James Moore believes that Walt Disney World Resort is a 'meshing of myths,' where the memories of a past idyllic life are not only revived through the reengineering of traditional architecture and urbanism, but also integrated with modern technology and commerce, all in order to perfect a utopian future" (280).

[21] Disney has certainly cornered an important market on problem-creating and problem-solving in Celebration's nostalgia machine (to invoke a phrasing used by Giroux 1999: 70).

seem to hint at a generalized feeling of security: "[i]n the spirit of neighborliness, Celebration residents gather at front porches, park benches, recreational areas, and downtown events celebrating a place they call home." (celebrationfl.com). Disney is able to sell old-fashioned community safety and neighborliness appealing to (white) families who may perceive themselves to be a target of crime by 'dangerous others' in the larger society. According to Giroux:

> Disney's nostalgia machine is premised on an appeal to the past that is safe and is predicated on the assumption that a viable public sphere is essentially middle class and white. Community in this sense has little to do with the risk of building democratic structures, of creating cultural diversity, or of addressing pressing social problems and a great deal to do with *the fantasy of social isolation* (1999: 70, emphasis added).

One of the ways Celebration's memories are 'designed in' (and the imagineered 'storylines' introduced) is through the creation and implementation of 'town traditions.' One such tradition is Celebration's own Founder's Day. In his commentary featured on "On-line Opinion" TCC president Perry Reader goes on to say: "[i]n terms of creating a sense of community, we had to start with some events – which included a 'Founder's Day,' fundraising events, festivals and parades" (onlineopinion.com.au/2001/May01/Reader.html). Founder's Day[22] is a very interesting community event to consider; the 'founding' of Celebration recalls a particular sort of 'pioneering spirit' in the early years of the town and it also implies, again, that nothing preexisted the development[23]. It is celebrated every year on November 18th to remember the first Celebration home lottery held on that date in 1995 (34737.org/forum, 11/01/03 "Founder's Memories"). One

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[22] Because there was more demand for houses in Celebration than there was supply TCC organized a home lottery for the first 350 homes. The winners were able to move into the first completed phase of Celebration in the summer of 1996 (celebrationfl.com/press_room/011030.html).

[23] There was certainly no town of Celebration on that land space before 1996, but to come back to Reader's assertion that *absolutely nothing* predated the town is to remember that geography in a very particular (and contentious) way. If 'nothing' was being done with the land Celebration now occupies before the town was

Celebration resident started a list of memories about life in town for the past seven years in honour of 'Founder's Day 2003' on the "Celebration Residents Discussion Forum" (34747.org/forum):

> Chat A:
> Founders Day is almost here again. Each year I try to put together a list of this and that. It's not formal. It's not fancy. It's just a collection of verbal snapshots of the early days in Celebration. I know – Celebration is less than ten years old. It does seem a little silly to talk about 'the early days.' But if we don't write the memories down and preserve them now, they will be lost forever. (11/01/03, "Founder's Memories")

Prompted by this invitation to remember together on-line several residents exchanged memories about life in the town over the past seven years. Reminiscing about the first years in Celebration one resident writes:

> Chat B:
> We were the second family to move in (after the [X's]) on June 19th, 1996… I used to love to walk out of my front door at night and there was nothing but darkness and silence. It was really cool. There were no street lights, no mail delivery, no newspapers, no downtown, and whenever you told somebody where you lived, they had never heard of it before. We really felt like pioneers. (11/02/03, "Founders Memories"; [X] used here to maintain resident anonymity)

An identification with the struggles and memories of the life of pioneers on the American frontier is evident here. During the first years in Celebration when there were only a few hundred residents the community must certainly have had a different 'feel' and 'look' than it does today (as a growing community of over 8,000 residents). Given this history of growth and change in the community many of the first residents did, and still do, self-identify as Celebration pioneers. In fact, among residents, there is a certain amount of status associated with having been one of the early pioneers. One example of this is that many of the residents on the Celebration discussion forum (34747.org/forum) include

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built this is certainly because Disney, as the most recent proprietor of that land, had decided that this should be the case.

their move-in date as a part of their signature affixed to the bottom of every message posted. People will sometimes also add that they were the fourth, the fifteenth, the one-hundredth (etc) family to move into town. Also, the residents who moved to Celebration in its first year (1996) often refer to themselves as the 'originals.' What this discussion about Founder's Day and resident self-identification by date of move-in highlights is that many Celebration residents draw heavily on frontier mythology to make sense of their place in the town (and even in history?). It may be difficult to understand why a person or a family would uproot themselves from their community to move to a place in Florida where they are without their social networks and where there are few amenities and poor services, but if this same transition is couched in a language of pioneerism then it seems to make a little more sense. Framed as engaging with the bold frontier spirit, Celebration-bound Americans can look forward to a widespread popular legitimization of their migration.

"The residents were just another sales and marketing tool, and treated by the new regime as if they were a necessary nuisance. Example – the residents were used to stage a welcome party for the 1000th home finished. But it wasn't the 1000th home, really. Not that the truth was publicized. The selected 1000th home happened to be an estate home owned by a photogenic family. They also didn't really live here. They lived in Miami and this was going to be their weekend home. We all received postcards inviting us, with very small lettering telling us that there would be a camera crew and that showing up gave them permission to film us for a commercial for Celebration. Oh, and everyone was asked to bring the new homeowners a pie!" (chat: 34747.org/forum, 08/05/03, "Research Paper").

New Urbanism and the Pioneers of Late Modernity

> Architecture's primary role is to imbue the structures and locations around us with meaning (Daniel Willis, *The Emerald City*, 1999: 3).

> Despite the multitude of ways in which our life and our society seem to be degenerating, I have come to believe that there is going on, in another direction, in small pockets but with growing force, a *process of civilization*. Imagine yourself being drawn into, call it if you will, the work of civilization. *Imagine that we are faced with a situation of some chaos and some decay. Imagine that our work is the civilizing of what is around us* (David Kemmis "What Good Cities Can Teach Us" in *FORUM Architecture* 1997, flahum.org/Forum/Summer_97/kemmis.html, emphasis added).

The work of 'civilizing' the built environment, of curing the supposed 'sickness' of the cities and restoring them to 'health,' is one of the ways in which new urbanism, as a design movement, is popularly framed on the Internet. In his article in the on-line *Magazine of the Florida Humanities Council* (*FORUM*), David Kemmis (1997) talks about new urbanism as a curative strategy for the ailments of the city. The city, he argues, is increasingly without civilization; it is disorderly and disconnected; it is in a state of decay. His work, as the former mayor of Missoula Montana, revolves around re-thinking how cities might be better organized to help re-invigorate the *civilization* of the city. Thinking about this discourse of 'improvement' in juxtaposition with Smith's analysis of the 'civilizing impulse' as a discourse of colonization on the *new frontier* demonstrates that whatever new urbanism might be, whatever good or bad things gentrification might bring to particular urban spaces, these planning discourses are highly contested and politicized.

Kemmis does not speak for the new urbanism movement in city planning as a whole, but the metaphor of sickness he invokes comes up time and time again (in both on-line and print literature) about the state of North American cities today. This metaphor is interesting, because as I noted in the first section of this chapter, 'sickness' and/or 'decay' refer not only to architecture and the built environment but are oftentimes ideologically transferred onto the people who inhabit these spaces and places. As such, these metaphors carry a lot of potentially problematic baggage; that is, the notion that the social world can be understood rationally, and perfected strategically (for example, through new planning initiatives and movements like new urbanism) necessarily sets up

dichotomies between the 'civilized' and the 'savage' or the 'sick' and the 'healthy.'[24] This forgets the myriad interconnections and blurred boundaries between these terms and it also forgets the ways in which these apparent opposites are mutually constitutive. One of the features of dichotomous thinking is that one half of the dyad is privileged while the other is marginalized and devalued; an unequal relationship is built into the structure of dichotomies. In the case of the built environment this has the effect of problematizing particular places and groups of people as 'bad,' 'disorderly,' or 'unmanageable,' while others, in contrast, are labeled 'good,' people are lauded as 'heroes,' and processes are described as 'rational'[25]. This is indeed a problem that many postructuralist theorists have flagged, exposing the impulse to conceive of the world on dichotomous terms is an impulse deeply embedded in modernist ways of thinking (Nicholson 1990; Hall 1996). The distinction between the 'chaotic sprawl' of traditional suburban design and the 'responsible planning' of new urbanism highlights this discourse of late modernity as it prevails in Celebration. Before I delve into the way this works, it is important to take a closer look at what new urbanism says it stands for.

Building upon a vision of an idealized urban environment, new urbanism appeals to a *neo-traditional aesthetic* while attempting to integrate elements of diversity (both social and architectural) prevalent in late-modern North American cities. New urbanism is a movement, a philosophy, and a new way of conceiving of community design; it was spearheaded in the United States in the 1980's with the construction of Seaside Florida

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[24] I recognize that there is no straightforward sense in which the language of 'health' and 'illness' can be mapped onto discourses of the 'civilized' and the 'savage.' To pursue their relationship is beyond the terms of this thesis, although it would be interesting to consider it more closely in terms of research about the effects of gentrification.

[25] Those who are fortunate enough to be cast onto the privileged side of the dichotomy are those whose perspectives on life must be honoured and taken seriously according to the logic of such thinking.

and it has been spreading rapidly across North America and into parts of Europe and Australia (newurbannews.com). The *Congress for New Urbanism* (cnu.org), one of the major web-portals devoted to the new urban movement, argues that the spreading 'placeless sprawl' and the environmental degradation implicated in the constantly outward-moving pattern of settlement are becoming enormous problems. Proponents argue that new urbanism offers a practical solution to many of these issues. The concept of new urbanism is based on the idea that "neighborhoods should be compact, pedestrian-friendly, and mixed-use" (cnu.org). New urbanist neighborhoods increase population densities in an attempt to alleviate the pressure of outward sprawl. In his on-line article "The New Urbanism: An Alternative to Modern Automobile-Oriented Planning and Development," featured in *New Urban News*, Robert Steuteville (2000) points out that the majority of American citizens currently live in suburbs built within the last fifty years (newurbannews.com). This has increased the dependency on cars causing environmental problems, increased public costs for expanding road construction and utilities, and stimulated higher levels of personal stress related to long commutes. Steuteville writes:

> The New Urbanism is a *reaction to sprawl*. A growing movement of architects, planners and developers, the New Urbanism is based on a belief that *a return to traditional neighborhood patterns* is essential to restoring functional, sustainable communities (newurbannews.com/AboutNewUrbanism.html, emphasis added).

New urbanism mixes residential and commercial buildings organized around a 'Main Street' core, de-emphasizing a reliance on cars, and attempts to create a sense of community built around shared functional space. Some of the main goals of new urbanism according to the "Charter of New Urbanism" (featured on cnu.org) are: increasing mixed community and diversity (in terms of 'race,' class, residential and commercial use), focusing on the re-invigoration and restoration of existing urban

environments[26], developing suitable access to public transit systems, building a central community core (i.e. a downtown center), and emphasizing 'walkability' while de-emphasizing vehicle dependence (the hope is that everyone will be able to walk from their residences to the central core within about 5 minutes) (cnu.org). The charter also highlights the importance of local representative governments, the aesthetic integration of architecture with indigenous environments and local cultural heritages, and the importance of raising population densities as a strategy to reduce the overall environmental impact of cities (cnu.org).

Celebration primarily integrates the aesthetic elements of new urbanism (rather than political and environmental ones) into its design; in other words, Celebration draws selectively from the tenets of new urbanism to include only the features best tailored to fit the sort of 'community' that Disney would hope to create. As a result, there has been a bit of disagreement over whether Celebration is, in fact, a 'new urban community.' For example, Steutville notes:

> In some respects, New Urbanism and Disney have been uncomfortable bedfellows. While using designers and principles closely associated with the New Urbanism, Disney has shunned the label, preferring to call Celebration simply a "town." Meanwhile, the movement has benefited from all of Celebration's publicity and its aesthetic and functional success – but not without a price. Disney has come under attack for what some perceive as heavy-handed rules and management. For those who would attack New Urbanism as insipid nostalgia, Disney is a fat target.
> (newurbannews.com/AboutNewUrbanism.html)

Despite Disney's official refusal of new urbanism[27] many current residents do believe that Celebration is indeed a new urbanist community. For example, after an extended

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[26] As noted above, some caution must be used here because the restoration of urban environments can often mean the whitewashing of particular geographical histories, namely those histories of people living in poverty, the working classes, and 'ethnic communities.'

[27] In an on-line article entitled "New Urbanism, Cause for Celebration?" an employee of TCC writes: "I've been working for The Celebration Company for the past six months… I'm not attempting to look at 'new urbanism' because Celebration doesn't fall into that category. Celebration is a town. Period. That

conversation on the "Celebration Residents Forum" (34747.org/forum) about whether or not Celebration ought to become a gated community (in light of a recent mugging at gunpoint in a Celebration neighborhood), one resident explained to another why gates would undermine the new urbanist initiatives underway in Celebration:

> Chat A:
> I'm missing something here… please help me understand… What's the negative to gates (overnight)? please something more than "undermines new urbanism" I don't know what that means???
>
> Chat B (reply):
> It means that Celebration is different. Gates are typical. I'll define typical: no sidewalks, more garage than actual house (snout houses), a lack of front porches, large useless yards that no one uses, and gates that don't prevent crime. Typical communities will be the crime areas of the future **not** large cities or new urban towns like Celebration… New urbanism is why your house costs much more than homes in Orlando. It's amazing that people can spend so much money with so little research. (34747.org/forum, 07/11/03, emphasis in original, "Armed Robbery in North Gables?")

Similarly, elsewhere on the web, the understanding that Celebration is not only just *an example* of new urbanism but also indeed *a model* for it (a poster child of sorts) prevails. For instance, Celebration is featured as a prominent example of new urbanism on a website called "Cyburbia: the urban planning portal" (cyburbia.org) run by the urban planning program at the University of Buffalo (SUNY). Similarly, in an interview in *FORUM Magazine*, Robert S. Davis[28] concedes that Celebration Florida will likely be remembered as one of the foremost models of new urbanism because of its brand-name strength; Celebration's association with Disney brings the community into higher profile, and with it, Celebration brings more attention to new urbanism (flahum.org/Forum/

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previous term connotes very specific building guidelines – things like street widths, lot lines and densities – not all of which Celebration abides by. Will new urbanism work? I have no idea. Will Celebration work? Yes" (impactpress.com/articles/aprmay97/celebrat.htm). Similarly, in another on-line article, "Deserving Celebration?," Mischa Viera writes: "The Celebration Company, which manages the town, is quick to say that it is not a true example of New Urbanism… but the premise, layout and design, is essentially the same" (ecoobserver.com/viewarticle.cfm?ID=213).

Summer_97/index.html). While it is difficult to ascertain whether or not the planning community at large thinks that Celebration is, par excellence, a new urbanist community, what can be claimed with certainty is that Celebration has been unable to avoid an association with new urbanism, both among planning/development professionals and Celebration residents (whether such an association was the intention of Disney's imagineers or not).

The tenets of new urbanism do not necessarily contribute to the process of gentrification that pushes lower income residents out of established communities, but the way Celebration selectively draws on new urbanist principles to sell an appealing aesthetic and sense of community does indeed recall the *new frontier* of 'urban reclamation' that Smith (1992) describes. The intersection of new urbanism with the new frontier is particularly interesting as it occurs in Disney's new town. Following the new urbanist tenet of providing a central community core, Celebration does include a prominent downtown center in its design, but it functions more like a chic urban shopping district than a livable, workable, common area. There are no quotidian shopping opportunities for residents on Market Street and basic amenities must be purchased out of town (requiring the use of a car, which undermines the new urbanist prioritization of 'walkability'). The Market Street area caters to the tourist dollar and not to the everyday needs of residents. On an Internet chatroom one resident writes:

> Life is good in Celebration… actually, it is just like any other little town. Either you can get very involved in the many clubs and activities… or you just do your own thing. Disney does a great job of keeping our town looking nice (even piped in music in our little downtown), which is one of the reasons we moved here, we knew it was always going to be kept up with Disney's name at stake. There is a problem tho [sic] with finding everyday things… being smack dab in the middle of everything tourist, you have

[28] Davis was one of the developers of Seaside Florida, a vacation town and the first new urban community built in the 1980's in the Florida Panhandle.

> to go aways [sic] to find a place to get your haircut (unless you want to pay an arm and a leg at the shop in Celebration), department stores, renting movies etc. [T]he shops in Celebration are geared towards tourists, nothing practical for us residents. Once you get used to that it is a nice, safe place to live. A great place if you have kids... very family oriented... and oh, so close to Disney!
> (groups.yahoo.com/group/WaltDisney/message/1373 01/07/03)

Something about Celebration, though, is not "just like any other little town" (ibid); this trend towards specialty shops does not recall a pre-1940's Small Town USA (which, according to the official website, Celebration is purported to emulate). Instead, it remembers the 'recovered' urban spaces that bourgeois city-dwellers gentrify rather than a real 'working' hometown-downtown. While 'traditional' small towns strive to cater to the basic goods and services required by their residents, retrofitted or 'recovered' urban enclaves for the rich and mobile invite, instead, boutiques, art galleries, and specialty shops. Celebration's downtown core appears to resonate more with the latter than the former.

On-line descriptions of Celebration do not make explicit reference to urban gentrification, however. In fact, Celebration's official marketing rhetoric goes to great lengths to describe the place as a 'small town;' many people who live there also appear to believe themselves to be living in a 'small town'[29]. The way Celebration is constructed, I am arguing, 'harks back' not only to a pre-1940's town (the official party line) but to contemporary urban neighborhoods that have undergone 'renewal' in the cities. This points to some of the limits to conceiving of the 'town' as distinct and even oppositional to the 'city' (or even the suburbs as radically distinct from metro-urban neighborhoods) because in late modernity these built environments inform each other, not just

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[29] I have gotten this impression from my many visits to the "Celebration Resident's Forum" (34747.org/forum) where folks talk about life in their 'town' and reject the suggestion that Celebration is 'merely' a beautified suburb.

architecturally, but also ideologically. Celebration, for example, is informed by the 'Main Street USA's'[30] found in Disney's theme parks, which are themselves informed by an abstract notion of an American tradition in small town living, conceived of in reaction to the sprawling post-WWII cities. On the other hand, Celebration and indeed all of Disney's 'Main Streets' are themselves informative of a new conception of urbanism; both Celebration's 'Market Street' and Disney's many other theme park 'Main Streets' reflect *and* inform the architectures and landscapes of urban centers. Chung writes:

> Disney Space is the invention of a new urbanism by a single individual, Walt Disney, whose yearnings for an idealized environment produced a series of, in retrospect, visionary moves that irreversibly transformed the composition of the twentieth-century city. Disney's humble desire resulted in the radical conversion of the city, from public to private, modern to neo-traditional, noncommercial to commercial. He accomplished this transformation by generating a template – recycling and reengineering an earlier architecture and urbanism into a new commercial nostalgia – that, in its renewable versatility, subsequently proved adaptable everywhere (2001: 271).

Celebration has been influential in the development of other small new urbanist towns (and other neo-traditional spaces) in the USA, even though the ideologies of 'new urbanism' that Celebration draws upon include predominantly metropolitan architectural vernaculars (Chung: 292–296).

The city/town separation is one that Celebration strictly attempts to maintain, however, by repeating emphatically throughout the official website and other promotional material that it is indeed a 'town development' and not a city or a suburb. The official website advertises Celebration as a place that takes "the best ideas from the most successful towns of yesterday and the technology of the new millennium, and synthesize[s] them into a close-knit community that meets the needs of today's families" (celebrationfl.com). This temporal blurring between the 'past' and the 'present' is not

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[30] The first 'Main Street USA' opened in Disneyland (California) in 1955; the 'Main Street' is the only entrance into the amusement park through which all visitors must pass. Subsequently, Main Streets have

simply a technological one; Celebration also blurs what it means to live in a city (metaphorically representing the 'present') with what it means to live in a small town (metaphorically representing the 'past'), which is ironic since this town/city distinction is central to Celebration's autobiography and highly detailed 'presentation of self' on the official website. While small towns are fairly economically self-contained, and generally offer some socioeconomic diversity, Celebration is socioeconomically homogenous and relies on Orlando and the surrounding series of interstate-fed strip malls to supply its basic amenities (as do most suburbs today).

In *How Cities Work*, Alex Marshall (2000) argues that Celebration (like all new urbanist initiatives he has observed) is really just a contemporary automobile suburb pretending to be a nineteenth century town, which is, in fact, very difficult to reconcile with functional urban design (2). Marshall argues that, while urban spaces are always dependent on systems of transportation, Celebration falsely pretends not to be (6). He points out that residents can indeed walk almost anywhere in town within about 5 minutes, but they still require a car to reach the basic amenities of daily life, and most people still face a long car-trip to work every day. Despite its small-town posturing, in other words, Marshall argues, Celebration is just as dependent on cars and freeways as any of the other 'conventional' suburbs in Florida (14-17). New urbanism does not actually curb the sprawl problem as it claims; in fact, it exacerbates the trend of moving people and wealth out of the cities and into the gated peripheries that surround them (Marshall: 33, 37). Also, while new urbanism claims to encourage diversity, Marshall disputes this. He writes:

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also been opened in Walt Disney World (Florida), in Euro Disney (Paris), and in Tokyo Disneyland Resort (Japan) (Chung 2001: 288 - 289).

> There's a lot of talk about how Celebration and New Urbanism include a diversity of housing. It's part of the theory that New Urbanism does not segregate classes like the suburbs. It's true that Celebration does have some mixing of housing, but it's a mixing of the upper class... The New Urban idea of diversity is to sprinkle a handful of middle-class residents within a solidly upper-income subdivision (27-28).

In this sense, taking Marshall's analysis into account, Celebration is more like a rich isolated neighborhood than a 'traditional small town'[31]. The main features that supposedly differentiate Celebration from 'just another suburb,' though, are: its downtown core, its employment of 'famous architects'[32] to plan the community and design its central buildings, and the persistent official rhetoric that Celebration is indeed a 'town.' While Celebration describes itself as an exemplary modern 'small town,' I am suggesting, instead, that the development resonates deeply with discourses of the *new city on the new frontier* both on material (architectural/aesthetic) and discursive terms.

The architecture of Market Street is a combination of brand new 'aged-looking' buildings[33] like Victorian styled homes (reminiscent of the refurbishment of an older area) juxtaposed with ultra-modern architectural designs. The contrast (albeit an artificial one since the whole town was built at the same time and under the auspices of a master plan) reminds me, as an on-line 'virtual visitor,' of a renovated urban neighborhood. The

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[31] What I mean when I refer to a 'traditional small town' is the sort of conception of small town life that The Celebration Company officially tries to promote. Some of the main features might include: central (core) areas where residents can meet for social exchanges as well as to buy the necessities of life, a mixture of people from different social classes in town, and a mixture of residential and commercial use (this is certainly not an exhaustive list). These ideas seem to have a lot of important linkages with the initiatives of new urbanism, further complicating Disney's ambivalent relationship with this planning movement/philosophy.

[32] Architects and planners that TCC explicitly advertises include: Robert Stern, Cooper Robinson and Partners, Moor/Andersson Architects, Venturi Scott Brown and Associates, Philip Johnson, Michael Graves, Cesar Pelli, Aldo Rossi, Roberta Trent Jones, and Graham Gund Architects. TCC writes: "Celebration's town center is a showcase of the work of some of the world's best know, acclaimed architects. These architects were selected to give each building a character of its own and to provide a variety of styles within the overall traditional design theme of Celebration" (celebrationfl.com/press_room/faq01.html).

'addition' of prominent architectural designs on Market Street (like the post office, the town hall, and the old preview center)[34] constitutes an attempt to "insert high property values and sumptuary spaces into decaying neighborhoods" (Davis 1990: 238). One of the principle design strategies on the new *urban frontier* is to build, or 'recover,' structures that will act as beachheads for the gentrification process.

Smith (1992: 62) uses the example of the Christadora condominium abutting Tompkins Square Park as an example of a beachhead structure in his analysis. Similarly, Mike Davis (1990: 239) uses the example of Frank Gehry's Frances Howard Goldwyn Regional Library in Hollywood as an illustration of this trend in Los Angeles. What both of these examples have in common is that one particular structure was either erected or 'reclaimed,' ideologically as well as physically, as the 'fort' from which the process of bourgeois colonization could spread. With one beachhead structure in place the stage is set for the gentrification process in the adjacent communities. This is particularly apparent in Davis' example. In 1988 Gehry was commissioned to design a 'vandalproof' library in a troubled Hollywood neighborhood and, by Davis' account, he accomplished just that. The Goldwyn Regional Library, Davis writes:

> [is] undoubtedly the most menacing library ever built, in a bizarre hybrid (on the outside) of dry-docked dreadnought and Gunga Din fort. With its fifteen-foot security walls of stucco-covered concrete block, its anti-graffiti barricades covered in ceramic tile, its sunken entrance protected by ten-foot steel stacks, and its stylized sentry boxes perched precariously on each side, the Goldwyn Library (influenced by Gehry's 1980 high-security design for the US Chancellery in Damascus) projects the same kind of macho exaggeration as Dirty Harry's 44 Magnum (239).

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[33] Chung writes: " in trying to recreate an older way of life, Celebration operates as a new town emulating an old town. Because it lacks the history normally associated with an old town, its architects account for this missing heritage by designing buildings that already exhibit the imprints of time" (2001: 296).
[34] See Appendix A: number 7.

The library is particularly interesting example of a beachhead structure of gentrification because it is not just an ideological fort, it actually looks like one (and yet it is also, of course, a functional library; this juxtaposition is facinating, as it brings the relationship between power and knowledge into sharper focus).

While Celebration may strive to *be* a pre 1940's Small Town USA, according to the official website and many of the residents who live there, its checkered architecture, which many critics have simply described as 'mismatched'[35], actually looks a lot like a neighborhood that has undergone gentrification by the elite. The 'town hall' building on Market Street is a fairly good example of this. It looks like a cross between a postmodern miniaturized Parthenon and a county jail. It also clashes markedly with the architecture of the surrounding neighborhoods. The architectural dissonance between the neighborhoods and the downtown area reflects a disparity prevalent in many city neighborhoods where space is divided up based on class and 'race.' Furthermore, Chung (2001) notes that the scale and design of Celebration's downtown purposely emulates a much more 'urban look' than its surrounding residential neighborhoods. She writes:

> In Celebration, reduced scale and forced perspective enhance the presence of the town's buildings and bring a feeling of larger experiences to small-town life.... In order to bring the designs of larger urban buildings to Celebration, many of the transplants have been wholly reduced in scale. The three rooftop towers of 701 Front Street are miniature versions of the Beresford, a landmark New York City apartment building on Central park, "scaled down for a small town" (Chung 2001: 293).

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[35] An editorial in the *Orlando Business Journal* includes one critic's impression of Celebration's architectural mélange. In "Disjointed architecture no cause for Celebration," John Henry writes: "The most obvious point to make concerning the relation of the CBD [central business district] and the residential work is that it is absolutely incongruous. There is no historical integrity between the period style of the latter and the unraveled tapestry and disjointed planning effort of any of the commercial work... What is the purpose of trying to emulate a period-style community of a particular era when it is *surrounded by an alien invasion* of pastel-homogenized, kooky and ill-proportioned, stucco, banal, detail-impoverished caricatures?" (bizjournals.com/orlando/stories/1996/09/30/editorial1.html, emphasis added).

While designers have attempted to physically create a small town center, Market Street and the surrounding 'downtown' look strikingly like a bourgeois urban neighborhood. Therefore, I am offering that Celebration cannot simply be represented as a small town development built on 'virgin' territory because it also recalls, architecturally at least, the new frontier of urban reclamation. There is also something interesting about Celebration's desire to incorporate architectural elements of the very city spaces from which it tries to distinguish itself as a 'small town.' Pulling bits of appealing architecture out of context (like the three rooftop towers of 701 Front Street) forgets the meanings these buildings carry (in the particular spaces where they are located), and makes 'ornament' out of spaces that may have much more complicated histories. This focus on architecture is also telling precisely because Celebration pays so much attention to how and who designed Market street; the architecture (and the eminent string of architects behind it) is an extremely important selling feature and this is highlighted throughout the official website. Rather than being 'simply' an innovative small town, Celebration's architectural emphasis apes the aesthetic logic of the new frontier; as a result, this has implications for the way social life in Small Town USA is constituted historically as it is architecturally re-membered in Celebration.

"Celebration's town hall is prominently situated at the head of Market Street, and to see it for the first time is to wonder if its architecture doesn't represent one of wily old Philip Johnson's more clever inside jokes. Johnson's design begins with the obligatory white columns, the same ones that have symbolized democratic values in American civic architecture since the time of Thomas Jefferson. Yet Johnson has taken this venerable convention and multiplied it ad absurdum, until the entrance to Celebration's town hall is all but lost in a shadowy forest of columns – 52 of them in all. A straightforward symbol of republican self-government is thus transformed into a disconcerting image of obscurity. It couldn't be more fitting, for Celebration's town hall is privately owned – by Disney" (Pollan 1997: 12).

Celebration also recalls life in an urban center in other ways. For example, in promotional material on the official website, TCC formally invites potential homebuyers

and renters who would prefer a more 'fast-paced urban lifestyle' to move into the downtown Market Street area. The following quote appears on that website in the pressroom area:"[a]partments and townhouses built in and around the Town Center district are available for those who prefer an energetic, urban lifestyle" (celebrationfl.com/press_room/). It is intriguing that the official website would describe the Market Street area as 'energetic' because one does not typically think of small southern pre-1940's American towns in that way. The stereotypical 'historical small town' that comes to mind, instead, is a place without traffic or major business interests, and is often scripted in the American imagination as slow and dreamy (this is how it is most often characterized in Hollywood films at least). The invitation to join the faster pace, or energy, of Market Street brings to mind a busy urban core, a bustling central business district, or perhaps an elite shopping area. While Celebration does enjoy considerable tourist overflow from the neighboring Walt Disney World complex, it does not have the characteristics of a bustling urban center. Why, then, would it 'officially' be described as such? My view is that in an attempt to please everyone – including those looking for a quiet little town as well as those who would enjoy a more metropolitan experience – Celebration reveals some of its own contradictions (pointing, perhaps, to some of the contradictions of capitalism). While 'selling' Celebration as a pre-1940's town is an important aspect of its representation on the Internet (celebrationfl.com) this commercialization of historical memory has the effect of resonating with the contemporary 'selling' of historical districts and neighborhoods in urban cities.[36]

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[36] These contradictions reverberate with the contradiction Smith sets up in his chapter where the pioneer-gentrifiers end up 'taming' the very 'wilderness' that defines their adventurous spirit by co-opting the 'desirable' locals and pushing out all of the 'undesirable' ones (1992: 75-93). I will further elaborate a discussion of the sale of city spaces in the post-script (see for example, Boyer 1992). This also animates

Also, despite all of the official 'celebrations of community' touted by TCC, Celebration residents often support very insular views and encourage neighborhood exclusivity; 'community,' according to many people who actually live in Celebration, has a very narrow scope and includes only those people who actually live in the town (often at the expense of the wider community of Osceola county to which Celebration belongs). For example, there has been a lot of controversy circulating recently on the "Celebration Residents Forum" (34747.org/forum) about whether or not children from outside Celebration ought to be bussed in to attend the local schools; at the moment (2003), a certain number of students from outside Celebration are issued 'vouchers' so that they can attend the Celebration schools[37]. While the Celebration schools are, in fact, public (part of the Osceola county system) many Celebration residents feel that their children alone should have the right to attend them and that the (perceived) inflated taxes local residents pay to the county ought to cover benefits like the exclusive use of local schools[38]. Typically, students from outside Celebration who are bussed in are poorer and more 'ethnically diverse.' Some Celebration parents have expressed worries about the presence of 'thugs' at the local high school, and the 'thugs' under suspicion are almost exclusively students who are bussed in. In light of these ongoing debates a group of

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one of the contradictions of capitalism because in order to get new 'pioneers' to move to Disney's new town TCC has to sell itself as a longstanding 'historically oriented' community but in the process of engaging in this selling it also necessitates that Celebration never actually *be* a longstanding community because people come and go constantly in the pursuit of profit; in an important sense the 'best customers' of Celebration actually over-identify with the project effectively 'hurting' the image Celebration attempts to portray by buying into the Celebration real estate project with so much commitment (thank-you to Mark Simpson for bringing this idea to my attention).

[37] 34747.org/forum: 10/25/03 "Let's build a Private Highschool," is the reference for the entire exploratory thread that follows.

[38] These debates over bussing children into schools outside of their immediate vicinity is reminiscent of the struggles over integration/segregation occurring in the American South, where African American children were forcibly 'integrated' into white schools causing much protest and even racial violence. This is an

parents have spearheaded the idea of starting up a new private high school to circumvent county regulations; while some parents have charged that this is an elitist move, others have countered that building a private school has less to do with racial and class isolation than it does with the opportunity to provide parents with more choices about the education their children will receive (see 34747.org/forum, 11/08/03 and 10/30/03, "Let's build a Private Highschool"). These debates are currently ongoing. Some of the attitudes reflected by Celebration residents over the school controversies reflect larger trends in North American city building to hierarchically divide up space, and the privilege to use certain 'public spaces,' based on factors such as income and 'race.' This separation of people in space - even so-called 'public space' - for the benefit of the privileged is indeed one of the features of the 'new city on the new frontier.'

In a final example of Celebration's complicated relationship with the *new city* on the *new frontier*, I draw attention to a recently held community event, sponsored by TCC, called the "Beggar's Night Party" (celebrated for at least the last two years in late October). As a part of their Halloween planning initiatives Celebration residents participated in a series of "Beggar's Weekend Festivities" including a pumpkin carving party and a 'beggar's night' costume party (organized by Celebration Parks and Recreation) (34747.org/forum, 10/19/02 and celebration.fl.us/modules). It is extremely interesting that the town's Halloween costume party should be themed a 'beggar's party' for a couple of key reasons. Beggar's Night is one of the many names that trick-or-treating on Halloween (October 31st) has been given, but it is certainly not a very common name in North America. Why, then, would the Celebration parks and recreation

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ongoing issue in American schools; see for example Adam Cohen's article, "After Brown: Still Separate, Still Unequal 50 Years Later," featured in the *New York Times*, section 4A"Education Life," 18/01/04.

department, operated through 'town hall,' call their festivities a 'beggars night party?' While this may point to a desire to associate the 'small town of Celebration' with the old-world charm of Europe I think something else might also be going on here. There are, in fact, no 'beggars' in Celebration - the homeless have no place in the community. This is the case because Celebration is nearly impossible to access without the use of a vehicle (as there is no public transportation into this area), so Celebration is literally inaccessible to the homeless. Also, the presence of 'beggars' in the community would certainly be disruptive to the idyllic (affluent) 'small-town space' that Celebration strives to create. To avoid encountering any 'undesirables' in town, the community is serious about surveillance and maintains a series of rules and regulations about who might visit, for how long, and how[39]. The community enjoys police protection from the Osceola county sheriff's department and also hires its own 24-hour security services; recently Celebration residents have also started up their own community watch program (celebration.fl.us).

Importantly, because no 'beggars' actually live in Celebration this theme for a community-sponsored social event provides a potent symbol of who is considered, legitimately, to belong in the community (and who is not). By poking fun at a stereotype, by singling out a 'beggars night party' as the theme for the Halloween celebrations, a message is reinforced about who can and cannot rightfully live in Celebration and be a part of the community there. Because there are no beggars in Celebration the very notion becomes laughable, as such it provides a good theme for an 'absurd party' (a costumed event). As a new community development that recalls the new frontier, poking fun at the idea *that there could ever possibly be beggars in Celebration* signals something

[39] This information can be found in the Celebration covenants which can be partially viewed on the "Front Porch" at: celebration.fl.us.

very important about how community life is conceived. To be a member of the community in Celebration it appears that one *must* first and foremost be a consumer (a homeowner or perhaps, a renter, or even a tourist). There is simply no space, either literally or ideologically, for the homeless, the propertyless, or the moneyless in Celebration. There is no homeless shelter in town nor are there any plans to build one in the future; residents might argue that there is simply no need, but the lack of need is engineered into the design of the place itself. Celebration does not leave itself open to possible 'undesirable inhabitants;' Celebration's definition of appropriate community life is extremely socioeconomically restricted, and this is indeed a feature of pioneering life on the new frontier. Celebration residents can play 'safely' with ideas about 'beggars' with little fear that they may actually encounter a real homeless person in daily life in Celebration[40]. Calling the children who dress up for trick-or-treating 'beggars' provides a source of humour and endearment for this reason.

Celebration's self-description as a perfect American small town is complicated by its relationship with the new and old frontier myths (not to mention also by the idea that there could be one singular idea about what 'ideal' small town life entails). While Celebration claims, through the voice of its official spokeperson (TCC president Perry

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[40] Themeing a party in a particular way carries deep meanings. Recently (September 2003) in Cambridge, Massachusetts some students at MIT held a "ghetto party" that was intended to make fun of gangster rappers. Revelers dressed up in "ghetto fashions" (including fake afros and FUBU clothing) and participated in other racist stereotyping. For example, the email invitation read that the party would include " KFC, malt liquor, boxed wine, 40s' hubcaps, and trashcan fires" (*The Tech* 10/10/03: 14). This party provoked outrage from African American students and school administrators alike and the controversy spurred several articles in the MIT student's newspaper (*The Tech*), elicited a public forum held about the issue on campus on October 19th 2003, and motivated a series of apologies from party planners. This points to the fact that playing with stereotypes, or explicitly Othering yourself in the name of fun, often arises in a climate where people feel that they are at little risk of encountering an actual person from the group being portrayed (or of being/becoming one yourself). In Celebration that group includes the homeless, and at MIT – an extremely expensive elite university located in an extremely expensive city – that group includes "ghetto."

Reader), to promote values and memories to which all Americans can relate, I have attempted to demonstrate that such rememberings are predicated on a forgetfully idyllic portrayal of history that reflects the interests of the socially dominant classes. Similarly, while Celebration asserts its distinction from the city and seeks to separate itself from perceived 'urban problems' it nonetheless integrates the logic of the spatially stratified social dynamics prevalent in late modern North American cities. These issues will continue to be pursued into the next chapter where I take a closer look at what version(s) of the 'ideal community' is/are fostered in Celebration across a variety of Internet representations.

** A Note To The Reader:*

One of the central anchoring points in my research about Celebration, its histories, its memories, and the discourses that circulate about it on the Internet, has been to constantly refer back to the ever-evolving "Celebration Florida Resident's Forum" (34747.org/forum). 34747.org/forum is essentially a chatroom where residents or people with something to say (or ask) about Celebration meet in cyberspace to discuss the town. The forum is operated by two principal administrators who live and work in Celebration; they took over an older Celebration chatroom called "xone" in 2002, formerly operated by a single Disney fan based out of Canada[1]. Conversation topics in the newly reconstituted 34747.org/forum are as varied and unpredictable as one might expect in any 'common room' with groups of people drifting in and out on a semi-regular basis. Threads range from questions about the best place to find house insurance to emotionally charged conversations about building a new private school or transforming Celebration into a 'real town' with real political power.

Because I had never personally used a chatroom in the past, 34747.org/forum was my first experience in this type of virtual space. When I first started lurking on the site (slang for the 'chatroom voyeur') I read people's comments and conversations rather academically; in other words, I focused on the particular content of what people said and how they said it in order to gain some tangible information about life in Celebration. As the months drifted by I continued to visit this site on a regular basis, but more and more it was for enjoyment, for reassurance that the space was still there, and oftentimes I went there just to find out what was happening in town that week. As my writing would stall (as it did at several key points) I would check-in with 34747.org/forum to remind myself that, even if my work wasn't progressing as smoothly as I had hoped, the town of Celebration was still there and life was still going on (so to speak).

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[1] After months of speculation about who runs 34747.org (including a domain search and other on-line sleuth work) I finally realized that the web administrators could be contacted directly (and easily!). I sent an email to the administrators in January 2004 and received a reply to my questions within ten minutes confirming that it is Celebration residents (and not TCC) who operate 34747.org.

Over the course of several months I began to 'know'[2] the regulars on the forum, to recognize their writing style and, the types of comments certain people tended to make, and even to observe the existence of a 'Celebration community' within the space of the forum itself. As I shifted from using 34747.org/forum exclusively as a site for my discourse analysis and increasingly as a site of interest and pleasure, the supposedly disparate worlds of 'rigorous academic analysis' and 'subjective personal interest' began to collapse into one another, and in some ways my project as a whole began to make more sense. While this project ostensibly involves an academic look at the discourses of 'community' and the production of collective memories in Celebration, I began to realize, from my own experiences on 34747.org/forum, that web-communities are, in fact, just that; they are 'communities' with their own sets of 'memories' and mores in and of themselves. After lurking on the site for a period of time I began to think of myself, in a strange and disembodied way, as a proxy member of the very community I was supposed to be studying. Despite my distance from Celebration (and the fact that I don't actually live there and thus can not 'really know' what is going on) I began to 'get' inside jokes, allusions to previous posts, and some of the subtler references to community politics being bandied about on the forum. I began to listen with an increasingly

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[2] Although most of the 34747.org/forum posters use 'handles,' which will be discussed below, I do not believe that this necessarily complicates the limited sense in which I proclaim to 'know' the various regulars on the Celebration Resident's Forum. Posters *do* take their 'handles' seriously. Just because a poster may use a name on the forum that is different from the one they use in the 'real world' does not mean that they don't wish to maintain the integrity of their persona in its social context. For example, one poster writes: "I also think about what I'm going to post before I do – I don't want '*X*' to get a bad reputation," to which another poster responded: "I agree with you – your online 'handle' can be smeared and if you value your identity in an online community then one is kept in line" (chat: 34747.org/forum, "Why hide your name?"; 'X' substituted in to maintain confidentiality). For further discussion about the importance of maintaining on-line integrity (and its importance to 'real/non-virtual life') see: "A Rape in Cyberspace" (Dibble: 1998).

sympathetic ear to the frustrations expressed by community members who reacted to what they perceived as the overwhelmingly negative and derisive tones taken up by journalists of all stripes who have continually made Celebration (and its residents) the butt-end of an ongoing joke about the futility of Disney-style American utopianism (including a recent mockumentary piece called "Jublilation" featured in the August 2003 edition of Playboy Magazine*). Because of my continual visits to 34747.org/forum I began thinking about Celebration residents as more than just 'objects' of my study; I recognized them as real people with complicated and interesting lives, and people with equally complicated reasons for having chosen to relocate to Disney's town.*

"Some day I hope to see an article about Celebration that isn't the same rehashed regurgitation of all the other tripe I've already read" (chat: 34747.org/form, 24/01/04 "Independent Bloopers").

One of my aims for this project from the beginning has been to try to remain as attentive as possible to calls from feminist geographers to resist the (academically legitimized) tendency to objectify my research subject(s) by positioning myself as an authoritative 'knower.' Pamela Moss (2002) argues, for instance, that geography (a traditionally male discipline) has been oriented by a scientific epistemology that posits the 'objective' vision of the researcher, reducing the field of meaning to that which has been 'defined' and 'discovered' by the 'impartial scientist' (7). Feminist geographers, among others, have problematized this epistemology in their work. Moss writes:

> *Placing feminist work as well as placing yourself as a feminist researcher in the context of research in geography and feminism – contextualizing your work – makes it easier to see where you are coming from and where you see your work going... Paying close attention to how ideas about feminism, power, knowledge, and context play out when undertaking the research itself and engaging particular research methods are part and parcel to doing feminist research.. (4, 9)*

The feminist methodology that Moss endorses with regards to feminist geography, however, crosses multiple disciplines, and similar methodological issues have been raised by theorists of many different stripes. Thus, in a desire to conduct my cross-disciplinary research in as 'feminist' a way as possible, my goal here is not to distance myself from my research but to engage with it, be moved and intrigued by it, and to realize the inherent limitations of my own vision. As such, while my own preoccupation with the life of 34747.org/forum scared me at first - could I really be a good academic if I found myself affected and influenced by my research? - this sense of anxiety has

ultimately fueled and channeled my questions and ideas about Celebration in productive ways; this engagement has provided me with another methodological layer with which to work, but this is a layer that is extremely important to the project at hand.

Heeding the calls from my feminist foremothers (geographers and otherwise) to question the dominance of enlightenment knowledge systems based on the 'unbiased vision' of the 'rational male researcher,' I have not explicitly tried to distance myself from my work in the name of 'social scientific objectivity.' Rather, doing close and engaged readings of 34747.org/forum (which has inevitably 'drawn me into' the picture) has been extremely fruitful to my research on how representations of Celebration on-line are taken up by some of the residents who live there, and also how Celebration is represented on-line in the space of the forum itself; without this layer of personal interest with the forum much valuable insight, I think, would have been lost. For example, because I want to remain attentive to the fact that real people live in Celebration (and not just imaginary characters who 'come to life' during those moments when I 'tune in' on-line) my personal and animated engagement has opened up more possibilities for 'reading' the community in a variety of ways. This has helped me think through issues about the extent to which Celebration's residents, and in fact how all of us, may or may not be subject to varying degrees of control that are built into the communities in which we live (I have examined this issue, in particular, with regards to how this is discursively accomplished on an architectural/design level in Celebration).

Holding this in mind, I must point out that the project of figuring out not just what the official website (celebrationfl.com) has to say about 'life in Celebration,' but what the residents who actually live there think, has not been tidily solved by my access to 34747.org/forum. The forum is a controlled space. All of the 'public' spaces in Celebration are tightly 'managed,' and this control also extends to the supposedly freewheeling "Celebration Resident's Forum." There are two site-administrators who have the power to censor what is said on the website and to erase whole threads of conversation if they are deemed inappropriate. Chatters can also petition the administrators to remove threads that they might later regret having posted. I have, on occasion, read controversial posts that have then mysteriously 'disappeared' (the bits of conversation I have cited throughout this thesis, have not, to the very best of my

knowledge, been 'disappeared'). The administrators also have the right to deny a poster access to the forum altogether. I am not entirely sure what sorts of things get deleted from the forum because, obviously, the offensive threads simply are not there when I go to look. Should I happen to fear that I am perhaps just being paranoid in believing that threads of conversation have been removed, or that particular chatters have felt 'silenced,' there have been some very concrete allusions to censorship posted on 34747.org/forum. For example, one resident posted an ellipsis (...) in protest of the silencing s/he had recently received on the forum (34747.org/forum 29/11/03, "...").

While the administrators do have some control over the content of the forum, most censorship actually comes from residents themselves. There is quite a bit of self-censorship fueled by chatters who openly chastise each other for making comments that are thought to be 'un-Celebration' (un-American?). In many ways the forum is the perfect panoptic space: there appears to be a constant sense among forum users that anybody could be watching/reading at any time, and as a result, certain types of comments often provoke disapproval from other members of the 34747.org/forum community (there is a general fear, for example, that 34747-chat can, and will, be appropriated for journalistic purposes, which, given the project at hand, doesn't appear to be a far cry from reality). There is a lot of self-policing that goes on among forum users and there are some boundaries that cannot be crossed easily. It is interesting that even in this space where people can hope to speak frankly, and where the 'official Celebration message' need not be constantly in the foreground, some people continue to want to maintain a certain level of 'town spirit' by avoiding negative characterizations of the place they live in (even if this means potentially closing off the space for critical reflection). Maintaining a 'positive' attitude is seen by some as civic responsibility while others feel that civic responsibility lies in their ability to speak out about things that are bothering them.

To get around the problem of personal accountability (in 'real life') for comments made on the web, many people use handles (pseudonyms), and some chatters have admitted to using two or more handles interchangeably when on the forum (depending on what they want to say). The forum appears to be an 'anonymous' communication medium for those who would prefer to keep it that way; however, there have been several

chatters who have publicly challenged pseudonym-users to 'come out' from behind their handles (even going as far as to accuse those who would not post their real names of cowardice and malice). Nevertheless, the small element of privacy that pseudonyms afford seems fairly important because it appears that many people would rather not have their identities made public for any number of reasons. While many residents do take the opportunity to speak frankly about things that are bothering them regarding recent developments in Celebration, I have noticed a tendency for others to 'shut them up' if they become too 'negative' or complain too much. In response to some controversial exchanges taking place on the forum, one resident wrote, for example:

> *It makes me sad to see all the complaining on 34747... We live in the greatest community that ever existed in this [sic] USA and indeed the world. And yet some people complain. Disney has created a model community - modeled after an ideal world. Celebration, unfortunately, only achieved 98% of those ideals. Hence the complaints. Get real people! Don't destroy in the name of "improvements" what was created. I have very serious concerns that the few malcontents will influence the newly reconstituted TCC to make changes to the detriment of the community as a whole (chat: 34747.org/forum, 16/12/03, "Part-time Residents").*

Chat A: "Why do so many people on this site use fake names? I have enjoyed the posts and comments here, and many issues that need to be brought up have been, but I still have a hard time, and it makes me laugh when a Comic Book Hero or a Cel##### makes a comment or voices an opinion! WHO ARE YOU??? and why should we listen to you? Now maybe a couple people know who you are, but why are you hiding behind a fake name? Are you afraid of your neighbors knowing its [sic] you? or your parents? Your boss?? Why?"

Chat B (reply): "Like it or not, not all the posters and/or readers of this board are playing with a full deck of cards. Some of us have been attacked for expressing ourselves."

Chat C (reply): "We are anonymous because we are in the directory - and there is no respect for our first amendment rights! There are many who have horror tales of being harassed by personal emails and phone calls for things they have posted. We choose to keep our private lives private and free of such nonsense."

Chat D (reply): "Why ask why? Did you not realize you are on the world wide web?" (34747.org/forum 29/11/03, "Why hide your name?").

The 34747.org/forum space is clearly a complicated one; it is both a space where people seek to chat openly about Celebration, but also one where the 'Celebration community' is exposed to the world (on the Internet) for wider public consumption and scrutiny. This creates a certain tension; while many people want to use 34747.org/forum as a space to air their concerns, others are aware that doing so might invite nay-sayers to feel justified in their criticisms of the town. Given this tension, I believe it would be impossible to distill any final meaning from the cacophony of voices that fill the hundreds of pages on the forum. But establishing a 'final meaning' is not the goal of this project. Rather, I hope to illuminate the way Celebration's story-telling is produced on-line, including the way the Celebration

'story' gets told on 34747.org/forum, in an attempt to take a look at a partial, but nonetheless valuable, picture of the way discourses of collective memory in Celebration are struggled over and negotiated.

My attraction to 34747.org/forum plays itself out on many different levels in this project. Sometimes I have drawn on actual conversations in order to better articulate a point I am trying to make, while at other times I have been motivated to research particular town events or politics because of exchanges that have taken place about them on the forum. The main point I would like to make here, though, is that the "Celebration Resident's Forum" has been one of the essential undercurrents shaping many of the ideas I hold about Celebration as a 'lived place.' This is indeed a place that is (in all sorts of different ways) messy, unpredictable, political, and diverse. As a result, I have attempted to reflect the complicated nature of this space in the body of this paper by incorporating quotes from 34747.org/forum throughout. While I will sometimes draw your attention directly to forum comments I will, at other times, let snippets of conversation run along the margins of the body of writing (in combination with other on-line quotes) as 'voices' filtering in from the background. The central point I want to make here, is that with every story I tell about Celebration there will always remain other, many, competing and untold stories.

Chapter 2

Public Spaces in the Privatized Town: Tradition and Consumption in/of Celebration

> In the spirit of neighborliness, Celebration residents gather at front porches, park benches, recreational areas, and downtown events celebrating a place they call home. Celebration is a community built on a foundation of cornerstones: Community, Education, Health, Technology, and a Sense of Place (celebrationfl.com).

Celebration is a fascinating site to explore my questions about on-line 'memory productions' because this community localizes generalized notions of 'American collective memories' in a particular lived space (which I observe as it is constructed in 'virtual space'). While Celebration is a specific place where both real people live and actual events and 'traditions' are carried out publicly, the town also represents what the Disney Corporation, as a dominant pedagogical force in the American entertainment-industrial complex, seeks to promote as 'family values' for the American people (and, as Disney's multinational reach broadens, increasingly to an international audience as well). However, what is the nature of 'American people' in Disney's understanding, and based on what definition(s) of 'family life' does Disney actually seek to sell its community? Celebration, as a Disney creation, offers a very revealing glimpse into *who* these groups might be and *which* 'families' and types of 'community life' constitute the Disnified ideal; while Disney's version of 'American family life' is reflected in its many cultural productions, Celebration presents a concrete attempt by Disney to reproduce these values and ideas in a real-life Small Town USA setting. While it is possible and productive to analyze Disney films, merchandise, and theme parks, it is my contention that Celebration, as a Disney production, offers us a very revealing (and tangible) a look into the

entertainment company's imagineered conception of 'the good life.' Disney has undertaken the complicated project of building a 'perfect American hometown' that caters to the desires of *actual residents* instead of pandering to a revolving cycle of entertainment customers[3]. Celebration is, on the one hand, a housing development located in the southern United States with defined goals for its 'community life' (just like many other similarly designed planned communities proliferating across the continent), and on the other hand, it is a reflection of a particular Disnified conception of the *American Dream* and a localization of attendant Disnified fantasies about the 'good life' in one specific town-like place; as such, Celebration actually has a cultural resonance that extends far beyond the borders of its small town.

Disney did not script the *American Dream*, but it promotes this dream in a way that seems to make sense and is saleable to a lot of people. Disney is further able to legitimize its messages in the cultural sphere by appealing to 'benign' and 'friendly' notions of childhood innocence and family fun[4]. The proof that Disney's sales pitch is working in Celebration can be seen in the fact that real estate has been selling very quickly since the community 'opened for business' in 1996[5]; furthermore, Celebration has continued to influence the development of other similar communities all over North

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[3] Since Disney targets children one might say that new Disney customers are literally born every day.

[4] As Giroux has pointed out, those who would undertake a critical look at Disney (the wonderful kid-friendly innocence-industry) must often face a lot of public disapproval, and even anger, from adults who themselves grew up enjoying the 'magical world of Disney' (1999: 85-86).

[5] In TCC's October 2003 press release the company wrote: "With an annual residential sales volume passing $120 million, Celebration has topped new homes sales records for the third straight year… The Celebration Company attributes this success to homebuyers' desire to live in a place where they know their neighbors and share a sense of community with other families and friends… Since 1996, when home sales began, interest in Celebration has remained strong, passing $600 million for total new home sales. Inspired by great traditional homes of the past, Celebration focuses a spotlight on the way town planning significantly influences the way we lead our everyday lives. Currently, Celebration is home to about 8,000 residents living in some 2,300 homes and 1,200 apartments (celebrationfl.com/pressroom/031027.htm).

America. In a 2001 press release timed to celebrate the community's fifth anniversary, TCC wrote:

> The impact of Celebration has been significant. When Celebration's original planners found inspiration in traditional towns of the past, only a handful of modern developments reminiscent of the 1940's existed. In 2001, as people search for places with a strong sense of community, parks for children, neighborhood schools and walkable destinations, *New Urban News* reports that 380 such communities are currently planned or constructed (celebrationfl.com/pressroom/011030.htm).

A very recent example of a community project that makes an explicit reference to Celebration, Florida is the development of "New Town" in James City, Virginia (Carter 2003). Carter notes that official marketing literature for New Town claims that this is a new urban community, and specifically that "the homes will be patterned after Celebration, Fl, a planned community envisioned by Walt Disney in the 1960's that finally opened in 1996" (*Virginia Gazette*: 29/10/2003). Also, like Celebration, New Town marketing executives believe that their new community will provide a model for other similar developments in the future (ibid).

Celebration is not just a 'cultural historical project,' in other words, but also always a 'real estate project.' Exploring the ways in which Disney's new town forms a part of the company's vast financial empire is not inconsequential to understanding the way Celebration is organized or how it signifies. In an important sense, a particular understanding of the American Dream on which Disney purports to draw in order to give Celebration meaning is actually put into practice through Disney's own production of it as such. Giroux quotes Benjamin Barber in response to a comment made by Michael Eisner that the Disney company only provides to its customers what it believes its customers already want:

> How can anyone take seriously the claim that the market only gives people what they want when there is a quarter of a trillion dollar advertising industry?... The great myth of

> capitalism has been the idea that all markets do is license and legitimize choice; markets empower people to choose, to vote with their dollars, D-marks or yen. But, at the same time, they close down broader choices… (1999: 30).

The American Dream cannot, however, be simplistically reduced to a singular understanding, articulated in its entirety by the market, and metaphorically and materially represented in Celebration. It is certainly not my intention to over-generalize (and thus reduce) the desires, dreams, plans, aspirations, joys, and fears of an enormous and diverse population that falls together under the geo-political rubric of "America," but Disney does capture an extremely important moment-of-Americana in Celebration. The values and social ideals forming the backbone of the Celebration philosophy reflect the interests of a company (Disney) that holds a tremendous amount of cultural weight and authority (Giroux 1999); as such, what Disney defines as the 'good life' gets a *lot* of attention (as well as airtime) and floods into the lives of millions of people worldwide as *the* representation of what a *healthy, productive, and morally balanced* America ought to look like. For this reason, taking a closer look at the way particular kinds of collective memory productions are negotiated and represented on-line sheds some light not only on what a small group of Americans are striving for in one isolated Floridian community called Celebration, but also what some of the dominant messages and implications of this ideal might be on a broader scale.

In this chapter, I take a closer look at local community traditions and events in Celebration, as well as the way the community is 'sold,' both literally and ideologically, on several different levels. The overarching theme for this chapter is a questioning and examination of the ways this 'privatized American town' is understood, articulated, and regulated by prevailing notions of the 'public sphere,' and how it challenges and potentially changes the way the 'public sphere' is in fact understood.

The four main sections in this chapter look at related aspects of the theme of the privatized-public-town and tell different 'stories' about the organization of community life in Celebration. In the first section, "Town Traditions," I focus on a selection of community traditions and events that TCC officially promotes on celebrationfl.com, and also at some of the 'unofficial traditions' that have been spearheaded by Celebration residents' groups. The sorts of community events prevalent in Celebration, as well as the particular focus on 'events' (as such) as an important element of community-building, paint an elegant (albeit partial) picture of the ideal 'community values' Disney explicitly strives to create; while Disney's narrative production, or story-writing, is important to think closely about so too is attending to the ways in which these 'storylines' are themselves received and 'read.' A look at community events also helps to illustrate the conceptions of 'family' and 'community life' understood to be the most valuable to American society from Disney's standpoint. I also explore the connections between 'community life' and 'consumable traditions' in this section (although this is a sub-theme that will be raised throughout the chapter as a whole). In the second section, "Buying Difference and Managing Historicism: Real Estate in Celebration," I look at the connection between consumption, community-building and a relationship with historical memory in more depth. Drawing on Susan Christopherson's (1994) analysis of *consumer citizenship* and Kenneth Jackson's (1985) analysis of the historical impulse of the American housing industry I look at the way houses are styled to connote 'difference,' 'choice,' and an engagement with 'history' in Celebration. In section three, "Images and Imaginings," I interrogate the official Celebration website itself, specifically in the way it incorporates the display of images to articulate a 'complete vision' of small town life.

This section provides a visual analysis of the official website and integrates elements of feminist theory along with Roland Barthes' (1981) theory of the photographic image to help draw out key issues. Finally, the fourth section, "Ice Cream Democracies," broadens the conversation about the management of 'difference,' 'tradition,' and 'consumptive citizenship' with a look to ways that notions of democracy are played out and literally *sold* in Celebration. I focus specifically on how 'community-building' and American-style 'democratic values' are conceptualized in this privatized-public-town, taking into consideration, in particular, the recent sale of Celebration's downtown and the implications of this sale for the future of the community. As a town that is officially painted as a model for American civil life I also think about what messages Celebration conveys about ideal social forms in the post-9/11 United States.

Town Traditions

> MARKET STREET has a variety of special events throughout the year, reminiscent of hometowns of yesteryear. Even if you can't make one of our special events, you can always enjoy our interactive fountain, take a leisurely stroll around the lake, or soak up the scenery from the lakeside rocking chairs.
> (celebrationfl.com/market_street/plenty_to_do.html)

I begin this section by returning to the on-line commentary highlighted in chapter one where TCC's President, Perry Reader, notes that the active creation of "town traditions that we can all relate to" (onlineopinion.com/au/2001/May01/Reader.htm) has been integral to the creation of Celebration's 'community feeling' and its 'small town appeal.' Reader asserts that TCC has taken special care to focus on community 'story-telling,' and has purposefully incorporated the Disney narrativization strategy into the physical fabric of the town itself. Insofar as the creation of 'community' is concerned, it would seem that these strategies have as much to do with the installation of particular

buildings and spaces as they do with the implementation of invented (or transplanted) traditions[6]. In fact, architecture and town traditions are conflated in Disney's 'community planning' initiatives in Celebration; they are often understood to be one and the same thing. For example, when talking about the design strategies involved in Celebration, Reader lists some of the significant buildings and spaces that have been important to the creation of the town, and he alludes to their traditional significance for memory building. Reader mixes places like 'the post office' with events like 'weddings' as equally significant markers for community story-writing. The assumption is that community can indeed be 'built' with the strategic incorporation of the 'right stuff;' in other words, 'community' for Disney is something that can be imagineered. In an excerpt from a speech given in Australia to the "Cities for the New Economy Leadership Summit" in April 2001, Reader says:

> The town center is where people meet. We believe a post office is a sign of community. A Town Hall to create a sense of public responsibility. The essential interaction for people when going to the bank – part of the story-telling. Doctors offices and other services that the community needed. Churches – when you talk about story-telling there's no greater story than marriage, driving by a church and seeing a wedding going on. Civic organizations and social clubs. Recreational facilities – the swimming pool is another opportunity for people to interact. Community buildings. (onlineopinion.com.au/2001/May01/Reader.htm)

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[6] The "inventedness" or "transplantation" of particular traditions is downplayed by TCC even as the company admits to purposely integrating 'stories' that fit into the larger conceptual plan. Just as the architecture in town has been designed to convey a sense of 'age,' 'authenticity' and 'authority,' the traditions (many of which are newer than the town itself) are designed to appear 'ageless' and 'historically grounded.' An interesting point to consider when thinking about the importance of memory in the creation of Celebration as a discursive and physical space is that when the community was initially planned a fictitious history of "Celebration USA" was written along with it. Disney imagineers sought to create a back-story to fill in the 'memory gaps' that would be necessary for the building of a 'real community.' The idea of including a make-believe history was subsequently dropped when it became apparent that writing such a history – or simply, a story – would make Celebration seem a bit too much like one of the theme park attractions featured further on up the road at Disney World; after all, Celebration was meant to be a *real place* where *real people* lived, and not just a staged attraction (Frantz/Collins 51, 52: quoted in *The Wholesome American Dream* http://eclipse.barnard.columbia .edu/~mc802/wholesome.html).

The spaces and places that Reader highlights here signal some of the aspects of 'community life' and 'tradition' that TCC has deemed to be vitally important to Celebration's construction as a 'small town.' In fact, one of the features that makes Celebration such an interesting place to look at from the perspective of collective memory productions is the very calculated imagineering of Celebration's supposedly 'naturally occurring,' 'common-sense' community traditions. Why is it necessary, I wonder, to work so hard to foster the supposedly *natural* evolution of community relationships? If 'American traditions' are really so clear, easily definable, and broadly shared, then why all of the effort to re-articulate and re-inscribe these traditions in Celebration specifically[7]?

TCC's 'traditions' are explicitly built upon the five Celebration cornerstones of "technology, education, health, community, and a sense of place" (celebrationfl.com). One of the ways this is accomplished (especially in relation to the cornerstones of 'community' and 'sense of place') is by promoting the creation of special 'events' that reinforce particular ideals and assign significant social importance to influential public interaction. Reiterating the message that TCC is 'committed to community' is one of the central projects in TCC's advertising scheme featured on the official website, in large part, I argue, because establishing a marketable 'sense of community' is beneficial for the purposes of selling real estate; selling 'community' as a lifestyle amenity gives TCC a workable niche in an enormous, and seemingly undifferentiated, American housing market. It is important to remember that, notwithstanding the official rhetoric that

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[7] In posing this type of question, I am informed by Judith Butler's work (specifically, *Gender Trouble*, 1999) in which she questions the supposed 'naturalness' of *male* and *female* gender characteristics, highlighting the fact that people need to work so hard (in the form of the constant repetition of normatively scripted gender performances) to create the illusion of this 'naturalness' in the first place.

Disney only seeks to provide 'quality family entertainment,' the company is also always a capitalist enterprise, with shareholder profit, not fun, as the bottom line. Celebration is, after all, an excellent real estate opportunity. It provides money-making opportunities for Disney and its investors who own the land under development, for the individual homeowners who buy and sell property to build up personal equity and profit, and for the hundreds of intermediaries like contractors, developers and retailers who cash in on Celebration on a continuous basis. In an important sense, Celebration, a project dreamed up by a Fortune 500 multinational corporation, exists to make money for the future while fostering the 'memories' for its residents today. For example, in a 1981 memo to staff, Disney CEO Michael Eisner wrote: "success tends to make you forget what made you successful… We have no obligation to make art. We have no obligation to make a statement. To make money is our only objective" (quoted in Wasko 2001: 28). Given Eisner's statement, failing to read Celebration as a capitalist endeavor would be a mistake. The suggestion put forward by Eisner here is that, ultimately, Disney is in the business of moneymaking and not necessarily in the business of community-building.

Because Disney is profit-driven, it is important to think about what sort of broader purchase Disney may or may not have in selling particular kinds of ideas (back?) to the American public in its many entertainment ad-ventures. As a cultural giant, the choices about production and marketing that Disney, a cultural giant, makes *do* have a tremendous effect on 'popular opinion.' In a dialectical movement, Disney both produces what will sell to a popular audience, and simultaneously defines consumer desire through what it chooses to produce. In the case of Celebration in particular, Disney both taps into a generalized sense of nostalgia over the perceived 'loss' of small

towns in the USA while actually having contributed to the creation of this nostalgia, in large part, through its idealized portrayal of 'Main Street USA' in its theme parks in the first place (Chung 2001). This complicates a strictly capitalist analysis of Celebration because rather than simply tapping into a pre-given set of 'cultural memories' on which to sell its project, Disney in fact has a hand in shaping the way 'memories' are negotiated and produced.

While the TCC attends to the deliberate creation of 'public spaces' and 'public activities,' the notion of 'the public' is circumscribed by very narrow conceptions of what a viable public sphere might look like (both politically and architecturally), and this is reflected in the sorts of traditions that are celebrated in town. As such, 'quality family entertainment' takes on a very particular set of meanings as it is played out in Celebration. To help unpack the idea of 'town life' that Celebration's marketing literature portrays as All-American, I am arguing that the 'homegrown traditions' of Celebration are reinforced and naturalized through normative framings that mask the constructedness of the all-American ideal TCC promotes (based on particular pre-conceived ideas about what Small Town USA 'traditions' are, or ought to be), making them appear like 'just the way things are.' To begin fleshing this idea out I will now draw your attention to some of the recent 'hometown events' that have been officially sponsored by TCC in Celebration.

The official Celebration website (2003) lists the following events: a 'Posh Pooch' weekend hosted in May, where residents were invited to bring their canine friends

downtown for a series of pet-related activities (including a dog 'wedding ceremony, [8]' silly-pet-tricks, and owner-pet look alike contests); a series of Fourth of July activities including a traditional downtown parade and an evening fireworks display; a Jaguar car show featured in September; a 'Falling Leaves' display downtown where biodegradable confetti oak-shaped leaves 'fell' onto Market Street, on regular intervals, in celebration of the autumn season (obviously the indigenous foliage does not sufficiently co-operate with this perceived 'natural fall tradition'); 'Founder's Day' events held on November 18th; and the 'Now Snowing Nightly' winter display, where artificial snow descended on Market Street every evening on an hourly schedule over the course of the 'Christmas season' (there were also nightly carriage rides, train rides, visits with Santa, face painting, and holiday carolers accompanying this seasonal event) (celebrationfl.com/events).

In response to TCC's many officially sponsored town events one resident on the Celebration Resident's Forum asks:

> Are "town center events" created to benefit the residents of the town, or are they organized to support the interests of the commercial district? These are two completely different concepts… each with its own merit. I wonder, how many events benefit the residents? And for that matter, how many of the 'local' businesses benefit the local residents? (chat: 34747.org/forum, 03/07/03, "Sale of Town Center and Golf Course").

What this comment highlights, in relation to TCC's orchestration of community events, is that there is a broadly held underlying assumption that Celebration can not both be 'pro-resident' (in terms of understanding Celebration as place of 'old fashioned community and values') and 'pro-corporation' (where Disney's capitalist agenda sets the stage for the nature and scope of community events).

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[8] Details about the dog wedding are featured in a press release entitled "Canine Nuptial are the *Bark* of the town" (celebrationfl.com/press_room/020520.htm). The "wedding" portion of the event highlights the institutionalized heteronormative scripting that takes place on a localized level in community events.

"The Front Porch" (celebration.fl.us), a separate site for residents and community groups operated by the Celebration Residential Owners Association (CROA) (the 'governing body' operating out of the Celebration town hall), lists another batch of community activities also. Some of the events recently featured on the calendar of this site include: the Royal Ballet of Celebration Nutcracker Extravaganza; a 'living nativity' scene performed at the Celebration Health Center during the Christmas season; a Celebration Spanish Club fundraiser (including a piñata, traditional dishes, music and dancing); an 'angel breakfast' at the Presbyterian Church to celebrate Christmas stories; a Sunday morning running club; a pumpkin carving festival and the previously discussed 'Beggar's Night' party for Halloween; a golf tournament; an art festival; a Japanese cooking course; and the performance of several different plays by the Celebration Players, a community theater group (celebration.fl.us). The community of Celebration has also been selected to host the 2004 American Pie Festival (chosen by the America Pie Council), which will take place on April 17, & 18, 2004 (celebration.fl.us; 34747.org/forum 21/04/03, "Great American Pie Festival").

These events, both those sponsored by TCC and those organized by independent community groups (most notably by CROA), have several interesting similarities that I will now explore. I will examine the ways in which whiteness, Christianity, financial affluence, and the apparent decreasing importance of geographical specificity are normalized and naturalized through the normative scripting of 'traditional community events' (re-articulated in town, in different ways, on a continual basis).

Social events, and particularly public community events, don't just 'happen.' Rather, they must be thought out, planned, paid for, and broadly participated in to be

considered a success, which signals a certain level of self-consciousness about the initiation of 'traditions,' and, as such, provides a revealing lens through which to think about the way these events articulate the interests of those in positions of power to bring them about. It takes a considerable amount of institutional reinforcement and the backing of powerful groups (like TCC in this case) to have 'traditions' officially canonized into community life. The community events sponsored by TCC, for example, must also have the implicit support of the Disney Corporation, and this support is likely to be granted only if events are understood to be in line with Disney's interests (broadly conceived). Attending to Michael Eisner's statement (noted above) that the Disney Company is responsible only for increasing shareholder profit, we must realize that these community events are also, likely, profit-motivated and ought not to be mistaken solely for an altruistic desire to support 'communities' or an abstract aspiration to make 'art' (Celebration was, after all, conceived under Eisner's tenure as company CEO of the Walt Disney Corporation). Keeping this in mind, I will now highlight a selection of the aforementioned events that have received Disney's requisite support.

The Posh-pooch weekend, Jaguar show[9], and golf tournament are all community events that signal bourgeois tastes in leisure activities; they are also activities that require residents to pay some money (or to have already invested a considerable amount of money in gaining specialized knowledges) in order to fully participate. The Jaguar show and the golf tournament, in particular, signify an ability of residents to spend a significant amount of disposable income on leisure activities. Why would Celebration 'officially'

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[9] A "Model A" classic car show is scheduled for February 15th 2004 and an upcoming Ferrari car show is scheduled in Celebration for the 22nd of May 2004 – it appears that Celebration will have hosted a minimum of three high-end car shows in one year, making this a very important angle to think about (see: celebrationfl.com/market_street/plenty_to_do.htm).

host a Jaguar car show in particular? Jaguars are very expensive vehicles that most middle class Americans cannot afford to drive, and the "Jag" is a potent symbol of affluence (as well as a bit of a sex symbol) in American culture for this reason. To host a Jaguar show, then, is one way of announcing to the world that Celebration is not a community of 'average' middle class households, but a place of wealth and success (as success is measured in financial and consumptive terms, that is). The fact that the car show was officially sponsored by TCC and featured on the top section of the front page on the official Celebration website for the entire month of September is very telling. The car show did not just happen to come to town, it was officially sponsored by TCC, and by proxy, it was sponsored by Disney. Not only that, but Market Street in downtown Celebration was actually closed down for the show, marking this as a very high profile community event.

"Organized in downtown Celebration, the Jaguar Club of Florida Concourse attracted about 35 Jaguars this year, all displayed on Market Street which had been closed off for the occasion" (southfloridajaguarclub.org/_events/fcof2000.htm)

The Posh-Pooch event, also sponsored by TCC and featured on the official website, is another example of conspicuous consumption in town. While at first glance it might just seem like a lot of fun to hang out downtown with your dog and other pet owners, the ability of Celebration residents to purchase expensive treats for their pets while dedicating an entire weekend to playing with them in public also signals a high level of expendable wealth (and leisure time) in the community. This event is also a way of reinforcing the heteronormative pro-family message prevalent in Celebration's rhetoric, as the Posh-Pooch weekend was advertised as a place for families to participate in a community event together and, notably, a canine wedding was featured

"Join us for a celebration for dogs and their people, featuring live music, demonstrations and doggie information, dog weddings, contests and great food, including special menu items just for dogs!" (celebrationfl.com/market_street/plenty_to_do)

as an important part of the events (we can safely assume, I think, that one of the dogs was female and the other was male).

The golf tournament is another example of the way an expensive bourgeois pastime has been given official status in the community life of Celebration. As Robert Stebbins (2001) notes in his article "Serious Leisure," the sorts of leisure activities one wants (or is able) to participate in signifies not only one's level of wealth and consumptive ability but also the sort of person one believes oneself to be in the larger society. He writes:

> ...some lifestyles can serve to identify their participants. In other words, the participants are members of a category of humankind who recognize each other and to some extent are recognized by the larger community for the distinctive mode of leisure life they lead. (56)

Hosting golf tournaments as a community activity signals an assumption that community members can (and should be able to) participate in this activity. Not only is the ability to *pay* for the community golf game presupposed, but the ability to *play* is also assumed; one of the ways this can be read is that consciousness about class membership involves not only the amount of money a person brings in every year, but also the lifestyle and social know-how connected with it[10]. This extends equally to specialized knowledges about Jaguar cars and to golf technique and experience. The institutionally supported normalization of bourgeois town events scripts affluence as the measure for well-functioning community life in Small Town USA.

In addition to inviting community participation from the financially well-off, invitations to join the public life of Celebration are also predominantly Christian oriented;

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[10] Golf is a game that requires a lot of practice (as well as the expenses associated with gaining this experience); adequate golf players, then, are not only in the *current financial position* to play golf, but must have been able to integrate this expensive game into their lifestyle for quite some time.

this orientation, however, is masked. Instead of inviting residents to participate in 'Christian traditions,' Christian oriented town events are referred to simply as 'community traditions' and are not recognized as the specific traditions of a particular religious group. Broad-based appeals to all Celebration residents, regardless of personal religious affiliation, or lack thereof, to participate equally in 'established community traditions' such as Christmas-time sleigh rides, admiring the display of a very large Christmas tree downtown, and visits with Santa Claus throughout the month of December, are a few examples of this (celebrationfl.com, Nov-Dec 2003). One might assume, by taking a look at the December 2003 Celebration calendar of events both on the official website (celebrationfl.com) and on the "Front Porch" (celebration.fl.us), for instance, that Christmas is an important holiday on everyone's calendar. The fact is, though, that although there appear to be some very strong Christian communities[11] in Celebration, Christianity is not the only religious afflation that residents hold. Among a variety of people who identify themselves as non-Christian there is, for example, also an established Jewish community in Celebration. On the December calendar of events on the official website, however, Hanukkah is given scant notice, and its mention appears on the calendar in a print size much smaller than the print size devoted to the announcement of both Christmas and Christmas Eve (see celebrationfl.com December 2003). While Hannukah is marked on the calendar, however minimally, December events remain fully oriented toward the celebration of Christmas 'events and traditions.' One might infer

[11] Even within the Christian communities a definite hierarchy seems to have been established. The dominant Christian denomination in Celebration is Protestantism. The Presbyterian Congregation was 'invited' by Disney officials to build in the 'heart' of Celebration's public space on a two-acre site (Smith 1996: wfn.org/1996/12/msg00117.html). The Presbyterian church is also currently the only religious group to have any permanent structure in town at all. The assumption is, I am proposing, that there is only 'space' for one religious place of worship in Celebration, and that structure is the Presbyterian Church.

from the marginalization of this Jewish holiday on the December events calendar that the Jewish community is also marginalized in contrast to the dominant Protestant one in Celebration at large.

Eva Mackey (2002) points out that by remaining unmarked and unnamed, the predominance of particular traditions (usually of white, Christian, and middle class orientation) as the basis for 'community events' masks the fact that these traditions have particular histories and meanings for certain groups of people (93). Speaking about the naturalization of whiteness in particular, Mackey writes:

> I argue that the unmarked ethnic and racial character of the 'white' activities [in Canadian 'multicultural' festivals] works through marking difference. Those who are different become located in a distinct conceptual space, as 'other' to that unmarked norm. They are defined by their cultural difference from what is simply 'normal' (93).

The process of naturalization functions the same way with religion (as well as with whiteness) in Celebration. Integrating Christian traditions into the overall fabric of the town frames Christianity as the norm against which all other affiliations and beliefs appear extraordinary and 'other.' Christian practices are not marked as 'culturally specific' but are understood to be a part of the 'everyday' experiences of American people in small towns everywhere[12]. As Christian-normativity is localized in Celebration (an idealized Small Town USA), particular understandings of Christian traditions are instantiated as the basis for ideal 'community traditions' in public life everywhere.

While the widespread integration of particular traditions into community life is telling, so too is the isolation of certain activities and events as 'special' or 'culturally specific.' The naturalization of whiteness in town is marked in several different ways

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Other Christian communities like Catholics and Baptists are forced to meet in community halls or other makeshift spaces, as are other religious groups (celebration.fl.us).

both on the official site (celebrationfl.com) and on the Front Porch (celebration.fl.us) by the special emphasis placed on the 'ethnic traditions' of others in the community (the established 'town events' are not similarly assumed to have any special 'ethnic' significance). In an August 2002 press release on the official website TCC proudly announced: "Sushi and English Tea come to Celebration" (celebrationfl.com/press_room). This announcement highlighted the opening of two new restaurants on Market Street in Celebration. Here is an excerpt from the Celebration press release with regard to these openings:

> Celebration's unique dining options are expanding this month as the community's town center welcomes Seito and Sherlock's. The Japanese and British offerings will compliment the diverse restaurant establishments already residing on MARKET STREET.
>
> ... Touted as a unique Fine Wine and English Tearoom shop, Sherlock's offers 30 varieties of handpicked loose teas and 80 different fine wines as well as a number of pastries and scones. Themed around the legendary Sherlock Holmes, the shop offers memorabilia, from T-shirts to English and oriental teapots.
>
> ... Slated for an October opening, Seito Japanese restaurant will offer fine dining with an emphasis on contemporary style and presentation. In addition to a traditional sushi bar, Seito's menu will include a variety of fusion dishes, appetizers and desserts. (celebrationfl.com/press_room/020813.htm)

This press release[13] highlights an assumption that Japanese and English cuisines are not indigenous cultural features of small town life but instead have to be 'imported' in the form of specialty restaurants. Furthermore, in order to participate in these 'ethnic cultures' one must literally consume them (by paying for a 'taste' at the local 'specialty'

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[12] It is also possible, I think, to observe the naturalization of Christianity (and more specifically of Protestantism) on a national level, not only in the popular media but also in the political rhetoric of the current American president (as well as previous American presidents).

[13] A series of 'press releases' are collected in the pressroom of the official site. I'm not sure if this is their intended final destination or if they are actually released to the public media; my intuition is that they are not sent out to a broader audience, and that they are simply called 'press releases' in order to lend some legitimacy to the "news" being covered. Whether the 'press releases' are actually released to the press or not isn't really important to this discussion as the goal here is to take a closer look at some of the things

restaurants[14]). The experience of trying 'new things' is understood to be most productively mediated through the act of consumption. Speaking to this idea, Susan Christopherson (1994) writes:

> One of the interesting twists in the production of contemporary consumption spaces is their relationship to the emergence of multicultural 'communities' and the elevation of 'diversity' to almost religious significance in the USA… This commodified version of diversity is not about traditions and needs but about surfaces – colours, styles, tastes, all packaged into easily consumable forms (414).

Multiculturalism is understood to be 'imported' to Celebration via new shopping and culinary venues on Market Street. The 'culture' available to be consumed has been pre-approved by TCC rendering it *safe* for residents to enjoy. Granted, the official website is dedicated, in large part, to advertising the 'many attractions' of Market Street because it is in the best interest of TCC to do so (as the former owner and the landlord to the many businesses and restaurants operating downtown). However, it is still telling that TCC advertises the 'arrival' of sushi and English tea to Celebration as a remarkable (and 'press worthy') news item.

This trend in highlighting 'ethnic specialties' as they arrive in Celebration in the form of restaurants and shops (with little to no mention of the so-called 'ethnic people' who might actually be bringing in these specialties) also crops up on the Front Porch community events calendar (celebration.fl.us). For example, while activities and services taking place at the Presbyterian Church take up a regular front page section on the daily events calendar, news items such as the Spanish Club Fundraiser are found in the 'special events' section of the site. While the Spanish Club Fundraiser is said to include

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TCC deems to be 'newsworthy' (whether that news hits the *New York Times* or just the celebration.com/press_room area).

[14] Even the assignation of the term 'specialty restaurant' points to the notion that there is a norm in American cuisine, and that the 'specialties,' as such, are measured against it; that *norm* is Anglo-American cuisine, while the *specialties* are everything else.

'traditional' food and music, the upcoming American Pie festival in contrast (and unsurprisingly) is not marked as a 'special tradition of Anglo-American cuisine' but is understood, rather, simply as an activity with which *all* residents are already familiar (and presumably, therefore, can participate in without much difficulty). The cultural specificity and 'ethnic appeal' of Mexican traditions in the Spanish Club Fundraiser is highlighted while the Pie festival is not[15]. Lest there be any doubt about who Celebration's ideal residents are, the multiple pages of the official website are filled with images of smiling white families of all ages; in fact, I tried, but could not find, a single image of a non-white person on celebrationfl.com (while some of the white folks portrayed might indeed be 'British,' it doesn't appear that there are any images of Japanese-Americans or Mexican-Americans on the website).

While on the topic of 'foreign imports' to Celebration I cannot resist the subject of imported weather. The 'Falling Leaves' and 'Now Snowing Nightly' seasonal displays on Market Street highlight the complicated relationship between negotiating canned 'American traditions' and the diverse climates, geographies and cultures that make up the United States. As I have illustrated above, Celebration attempts to integrate a series of 'American traditions' into its calendar of events with an eye to fostering a *real hometown community social life*. Many of the traditions that Celebration calls, simply, 'American,' in fact have rich and culturally specific heritages. The four-season climate with a distinct (and stereotypical) spring (flowers), summer (sunshine), fall (leaves) and winter (snow), for example, is romanticized in a very particular way as it is associated with the naturalization of 'American traditions' in Celebration. The unproblematic

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[15] As the saying goes: "*there's nothing more American than apple pie*," and in Celebration this indeed seems to be the case. Apple pie is quintessentially 'American,' while sushi, English tea and Mexican food,

incorporation of 'traditions' into the town vernacular (both ideologically and materially) requires an apparent suspension of belief with respect to the peculiarities of space and place on the part of the 'reader.' Because the climate of Florida appears to be uncooperative with certain perceived 'American traditions,' TCC physically attempts to artificially re-create the 'missing' geography/climate to create seasonal ambiance in Celebration. Thanks to modern technological capabilities, the natural dictates of the weather need not control 'tradition' any longer. As noted previously, since there are no large oak trees that shed their leaves in the fall around thanksgiving time in Celebration, TCC had leaves made out of a biodegradable paper-product 'fall' onto Market Street. Similarly, since there is no snow in Florida during the winter months, TCC produced artificial snow to create that effect (motivated by a desire to create a 'white Christmas'[16]).

At first glance I thought these imagineered practices were simply idiosyncratic (and even funny), demonstrating an excess of general community wealth combined with Disney's imaginative might, but as I thought a little more about the issue I began to realize that the fake snow and leaves were in fact rich symbolic moments in Disney's attempt to create the perfect small town. Elements of 'American traditions' are selectively chosen and re-assembled in Celebration in a manner that is supposed to create a generalized 'traditional community atmosphere,' but these gestures actually reveal some of the contradictions and confusions inherent in this attempt. The idea of enjoying the (Christmas-oriented) 'holiday season' with snow in Florida is dissonant, if not slightly absurd. I don't say this because I believe that 'nature' ought not be tampered

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it would seem, are not.

[16] One registered user on the Resident's Forum (34747.org/forum) has recently added a sarcastic signature to the bottom of her/his postings that reads: "This is Florida, if you want a white Christmas… go to the beach." For an image of "Now Snowing Nightly" see Appendix A: number 4.

with in such a way (obviously human beings have had personal 'climate control,' both indoors and outdoors, for quite a long time now), but what is most revealing, I think, is the assumption that there is only one way to celebrate American traditions.

The Disnified ideas about 'ideal urbanism' and 'American tradition,' as they are re-membered in Celebration, are quite limiting and narrow, and risk jeopardizing locally established forms of cultural expression that may arise out of particular communities in relationship with particular spaces[17]. It also forces communities to consume pre-established forms of culture that require people to purchase the 'missing' geographical ambiance in order to make the 'celebration of tradition' meaningful. What might the display of tradition and community life in Celebration tell us about dominant developments of 'tradition' in the American imagination as a whole? Again, while I want to remain attentive to the potential perils of over-generalizing, the notion that traditions exist abstractly, distinct from particular political communities, local geographies, and climactic limitations (and can as such be easily 'transplanted' into a new space without much trouble), is repeated and re-inscribed in Celebration's articulation of the American ideal in small town living. Celebration both is informed by particular 'historical memories' of Small Town USA and, through its very existence and continued success as a representation of that particular interpretation, contributes to the reinforcement and continual re-writing of this 'history.' Disney's community thus localizes broad normative understandings of American culture through the production of

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[17] Referring to the 'creative geography' prevalent in the Disneyzone (all things Disney), Michael Sorkin (1992) writes "Television and Disneyland operate similarly, by means of extraction, reduction, and recombination, to create an entirely new, *antigeographical space*... Disneyland, with its channel-turning mingle of history and fantasy, reality and simulation, invents a way of encountering the physical world that increasingly characterizes daily life. *The highly regulated, completely synthetic vision provides a*

its own 'small town events' and 'community traditions.' And these traditions, as I have tried to point out, reveal assumptions that the ideal community life in the United States is based on upper-middle class, white, Protestant, heterosexual 'family values.'

Because these 'natural traditions' have to be, in some sense, forced (requiring much effort and financial commitment), one consequence is that local settings and practices are understood to be somehow inadequate. However, it is through the constant repetition of particular traditions that ideas about the 'naturalness' of traditional forms (a *white Christmas* on Market Street, for instance), can persist across the variable climates and populations of North American geography. It is clearly not 'nature' that brings snow to December everywhere in equal proportions, but the continual discursive and material normalization of this ideal in Celebration actually appears to *make it so*[18]. While the weather is one of the most straightforward examples of the way this works in Celebration, I suggest that this argument of normativity can also be extended to all manner of 'town traditions' that have been brought to life in this way in Celebration. The way Celebration's traditions incorporate consumption as a communally-binding activity (illustrated by the community golf tournament, the Posh-Pooch events, the Jaguar show, and the importation of 'ethnic restaurants' to Market Street) also naturalizes the connection between the experience of community living and a consumer power to collectively define the 'good life.' An idea that gets reinforced through Celebration's repetition of 'traditional' performances is that consumption is indeed deeply connected to

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simplified, sanitized experience that stands in for the more undisciplined complexities of the city (208, emphasis added).

[18] In her book *Mappings: Feminisms and the Geographies of Encounter*, Susan Friedman (1998) writes, "Identification with a cultural group is acted out or performed through repetitions of behaviors and beliefs associated with a collectivity. As an 'imagined community' (to echo Benedict Anderson), groups contain individuals who reiterate the normative patterns of the group with which they identify" (76-77).

community life and so-called family values. Furthermore, there is an underlying assumption that 'difference' can be managed along with 'tradition' on a consumptive level.

Buying 'Difference' and Managing the Historical: Real Estate in Celebration

My aims for this section are two-fold. First, I will take you on a quick virtual tour of the housing market in Celebration (as it is portrayed on the official website), paying special attention to the way 'history' is incorporated and aesthetically fostered. Secondly, I will explore what it might mean to express personal choice and individuality by purchasing a particular type of home in Celebration. I take a look, specifically, at the way purchasing real estate materializes a symbolic engagement with historical memory in Disney's town. One important way that residents are able to signal personal choice, their 'political' commitment to Celebration and their engagement with the 'history' of American civil society in Small Town USA is, for example, through the type of home they decide to purchase; furthermore, while residents are invited to express their personal individuality through their acts of consumption, the choice is actually limited to a very narrow pre-established selection of housing options in Celebration. One of the central claims this section makes is that personal difference and individuality are constructed within a paradigm of 'consumer choice' this creates the potential to radically limit what it means to live in relationship with the past.

The largest and most comprehensive section on the official website (celebrationfl.com) is devoted exclusively to selling real estate in Celebration; there are more pages devoted to providing specific information about available homes for sale,

styles, prices, and links to builders, than there are devoted to any other kind of information on the website. Clearly, selling homes is a priority for TCC. One of the ways TCC draws special attention to its residential section is by promoting a clear and distinctive *vision* of town life. In Celebration, residents will not be buying into 'just another suburb,' the marketing literature suggests, but they will become a part of a *real small town*. Selling 'town charm' is clearly an important marketing angle, but how is this 'charm' emphasized and with what meaning(s)?

One of the ways TCC sells Celebration on an ideological level is by highlighting that the development is based on a pre-1940's town model. An appeal to the 'past' signifies an ideological connection with 'American community' in general, as well as fostering the idea that Celebration offers a similar form of community life for families today. One strategy employed by TCC to establish a historical connection with 'American community' is by architecturally incorporating 'historically styled' homes.

"CELEBRATION's vision is a community bound together through the values of shared responsibility, lifelong learning, wellness, civic pride, and innovation. The town's founders spent several years studying communities as diverse as Savannah, Georgia, and East Hampton, New York" (celebrationfl.com/community/cornerstones).

In an attempt to create the sense that residents are living in an ideal Small Town USA the different neighborhoods are called 'villages' and the home plans are all pulled from older models in towns found throughout the United States. Residents are not just invited to buy a *house* in Celebration, they are invited to buy a *home* and to join a *community*. One of the ways the hundreds of brand new houses filling the streets of Celebration are styled to connote 'homey-ness' is by appealing to the 'age,' 'authenticity,' and a sense of permanence associated with established architectural forms in the United States. Interestingly, the homes in Celebration recall 'older styles' in American architectural

vernacular to connote a sense of 'authenticity' while, ironically, the styles that the 'historical homes' are modeled after *themselves* recalled older established European styles with the same goal of infusing the American architecture of the time with 'historical legitimacy' and a connection with 'tradition' (Jackson 1983: 50-51). Nevertheless, residents are invited to engage with the 'history' of small town life in America through the act of purchasing their new home. Residents are not just buying another suburban tract house, they are buying (and buying into) a *real piece of America*.

In *Crabgrass Frontier: the Suburbanization of the United States*, Kenneth T. Jackson notes (1985) that there has been a longstanding propensity in the American housing industry to style residences in a way that signifies a long history or family tradition of dwelling when, in reality, these houses are typically only semi-permanent abodes (50-51). Americans, Jackson notes, tend to move; they do not often stay put in one house for generations (like their European cousins may possibly have done - or still do). One way of getting around this inconsistency between a 'real' (transient) and an 'idealized' (stationary) past seems to be in building houses with historical architectural themes; this serves to provide the homes with an appearance of added weight and substance. In other words, the 'traditional' residences provide the community with an overall sense of stability even if individual houses are destined to turn over as real estate continuously in the future. Because Jackson (1985) makes a very important, and elegant, point about the 'historical impulse' in American homeownership I will

Chat A: "My husband and I are seriously considering relocating to Celebration... I understand that Central FL is somewhat of a transient area... I am just wondering how 'transient' the community in Celebration is"

Chat B (reply): "My belief is that Celebration attracts people that are transient. They might not have moved here if they weren't. Many homes are for sale here at any given time. I would be surprised if 20% of the neighbors on our street were here 10 years from now" (34747.org/forum, 11/05/03, "Turnover in Schools and Town").

quote him at length. Speaking to the (classed) American trend in suburban living in the nineteenth century, he writes:

> On the simplest and most basic level, the notion of life in a private house represented stability, a kind of anchor in the heavy seas of urban life. The American population, however, was very transitory. The United States was not only a nation of immigrants, but a nation of migrants. Alexis de Tocqueville observed in 1835, "An American will build a house and sell it before the roof is on," and recently urban historians have demonstrated that in fact residence at the same address for ten years was highly unusual in the nineteenth century… Despite such mobility, permanent residence was considered desirable, and, then as now, homeownership was regarded as a counterweight to the rootlessness of an urbanizing population. The individual house was often no more than one in a series of houses, yet it assumed to itself the values once accorded only to the ancestral house, establishing itself as the temporary representation of the ideal permanent home. Although a family might buy the structure planning to inhabit it only for a few years, the Cape Cod, Colonial Revival, and other traditional historical stylings politely ignored their transience and provided an architectural symbolism that spoke of stability and permanence (50-51).

In its appeals to longstanding 'old-fashioned community life,' Celebration, it seems, also willfully ignores the transience of the American population both now and in the 'idealized' pre-1940's townscape (although, ironically, Celebration depends on this transient impulse to bring in fresh 'pioneering' families to the *new frontier* of Disney's 'recovered swampland' on the outskirts of its theme park complex in Florida). Interestingly, while there is an attempt by TCC to recall a history of stability in small town living in Celebration, historically styling homes actually *does* recall urban trends in pre-1940's USA more than it realizes (but the 'historical accuracy' of a longstanding trend in the American housing industry to 'wax historical' is likely not the relationship with the past that TCC is striving for).

In addition to the architectural 'pre-1940's stylings,' one of the ways TCC discursively reiterates a relationship with the past in by giving homes historically resonant names. As Disney actively attempts to cultivate a sense of tradition and community in Celebration, home-naming, in particular, becomes a very important site for this process. Giving homes 'traditional names' serves, perhaps, to mask an underlying

uneasiness that the 'sacrosanct' family home is also, always, an important financial asset and essentially a mutable piece of real estate. On its official website TCC both invites potential buyers to move into an established 'community lifestyle' in town but also seeks to reassure homeowners that property values will stay high and that Celebration homes will prove to be a profitable investment for buyers[19]. An example of some of the names of homes in Celebration featured on celebrationfl.com are: the "The Rosalie," the "Churchill Colonial," and the "Renee Costal" (celebrationfl.com/residential/homes.html). These names evoke not only a particular way of remembering 'past' architectural styles (which have been tailored and retrofitted to blend seamlessly together in Celebration's streetscapes), but also a particular version of American housing history. What is forgotten in the way the history of American housing is recalled in Celebration is that suburban living (and 'small town' living - remembered in a particularly upper-middle class way) has not been the only way that recent North Americans have resided; for example, there has been a long tradition of city living in the United States. Although a significant feature of the American Dream is the desire to own one's own home and to command some 'private space,' historically speaking, this has simply not been the case for most Americans. Jackson notes:

> By 1890... the United States had already become the world's leading industrial nation. In that year the country was already one-third urban and the population of the Northeast was well over one –half urban... As more people crowded together in public spaces, families sought to protect home life by building private spaces (1985: 47).

Jackson should have really been more precise here and noted, instead, that "[*affluent families*] sought to protect home life by building private spaces" (47). The people who

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[19] Celebration certainly is a considerable 'investment;' in the December 26th 2003 edition of the *Orlando Sentinel* staff writer April Hunt notes, "more than 8,000 people live in a place where homes start [on average] at about $350,000, more than double the Osceola County's average" (34747.org/forum, 04/01/04, "Another Slanttinel Article").

were able to start this 'tradition' of building private spaces as a refuge from the rest of the world were members of the wealthier classes. This is important to Disney's historical project because Celebration's appeal to traditional community forms *forgets* (strategically) that this 'tradition' of private home ownership was actually only a possibility for the rich. The less affluent working classes have had long traditions of creating different community forms in urban settings, and in living without as much so-called 'private space'[20]. Thus, the way TCC organizes the residential villages in Celebration *remembers* the '1940's town' as much more broadly affluent than it probably was. Situated between the two world wars, and right in the middle of the great depression that devastated the American economy while endemic unemployment ravaged the society, the 'pre-1940's' Small Town USA that is nostalgically recalled in Celebration was not likely to have housed the rich architectural styles and lavishly well-kept family homes that Disney's town offers today. While Celebration reminiscently pulls from different architectures of the late 19th and early 20th century small towns, it simultaneously needs to forget the political, economic and social climates in which these spaces existed.

Keeping this background in mind, Disney's appeal to historical memory in Celebration is subsequently 'managed' by ordering the past into a coherent narrative where 'historical' architectures and 'community traditions' are employed to justify (and lend some legitimacy to) the consumption-oriented hegemony of the American upper-middle class residential forms today. History is employed strategically, and aesthetically, to fit in with the "needs of families today" (celebrationfl.com). The way various housing

[20] Class and race are complexly intertwined in the United States, so the over-representation of the traditions of the rich in the memories of 'small town life' is also generally an over-representation of White

styles from different times and spaces are unproblematically mixed and matched together in Celebration metaphorically represents the ease with which TCC's narrative 'slides' the past deterministically into the present. In many of its cultural productions, and notably in Celebration, Disney has consistently appropriated 'history' as a tool that can be manipulated to normalize the status quo in Disney's interest as a multinational corporation to secure a consumption-oriented present and future (Giroux 1999); this same strategy is at work in its 'town concept.' This move towards a 'Disney style' consumption-oriented society has the potential to seriously alter how democracy and social justice are conceived. Giroux discusses this idea in relation to the culture of children (since this is Disney's main target audience), but I think his point can be extended to North American culture in general (as it is exemplified in Celebration). Giroux writes:

> As commercial culture and the language of the market becomes a substitute for the language of democracy, consumerism appears to be the only kind of citizenship being offered to children. Consumerism, corporatism, and technological progress become the central principles for constructing who we are and how we act. Democratic identities are replaced by consuming patterns, and the good life is constructed in terms of what we buy (1999: 24).

'History' in Celebration is employed strategically, pulling from different times and places, and drawn together in one consumer space. If the past is indeed invoked in Celebration to help sell homes in the present, if catering to nostalgia is the hottest new niche market, then where does this leave the possibility for historical rememberings that clash with the market imperatives of today? What sorts of effects might such a single-minded focus on the past have on collective memories in the future? Does it even make sense to worry about 'remembering' in the future?

Anglo-Saxon Protestant traditions.

Disney is notoriously strict in the aesthetic regimentation of its 'public spaces,'[21] and this same control is present in its management of Celebration. While homeowners are certainly led to believe that they have quite a bit of choice about what sort of homes they can purchase, the architectural diversity is actually quite limited. There are six principle housing styles in Celebration, all of which are correlated with different price ranges. The available styles are: the "Colonial Revival" (based on a 1920's-1940's North Eastern American style); the "Victorian" (based on 19th century pattern-book designs); the "Classical" (drawing from 18th and 19th centuries, and Greek revival architecture); the "Coastal" (based on French colonial and Low Country architectural traditions); the "Mediterranean" (based on a local coastal Florida architectural style); and the "French" (based on a rural French architectural character that became popular in the USA before WWII) (celebrationfl.com/residential.residential). The six styles are all historically-oriented and recall a mélange of architectural traditions (in a mixture of both American and international styles). Interestingly, although the styles emanate from different time periods and geographies they are employed together to articulate a singular vision of the pre-1940's American small town in Celebration.

"Conceived of as a small southeastern town, Celebration features a series of residential neighborhoods, each planned around a public area. Celebration's houses blend traditional southeastern exteriors with interiors that reflect today's lifestyles and tastes. Like many traditional neighborhoods, houses in Celebration are oriented toward front yards and feature welcoming front porches" (celebrationfl.com/press_room/faq10).

In addition to the six housing styles there are also eight different 'home types' (or 'price groups': USD $170,000 – $1,500,000+), which range from small townhouse

[21] See, for example, "Say "Cheese": The Disney Order that is not so Mickey Mouse" in *Private Policing* (1987) by Clifford Shearing and Phillip Stenning.

apartments on Market Street to very large single-family homes on sprawling lots (celebrationfl.com/residential/homes.html). Generally, the more expensive the home, the more style choices homeowners will have. For example, while the 'bungalow' (starting at $180,000) only offers potential residents four style choices and the 'village home' (starting at $350,000) offers five, the 'estate home,' the most expensive type of residence available (starting at $800,000), offers the choice of all six possibilities (celebrationfl.com/residential.residential.htm). Choice is limited, however, in all cases to the six pre-established patterns (with possible exceptions for estate homebuilders who are permitted to hire a pre-approved architect for a more personalized design within the confines of the town themes). It is against the rules to build the same style of house as either of your immediate neighbors, and certain housing styles are only available in certain price ranges. Taking all of these factors into consideration, 'choice' is even more limited than it first appears; not only are there strict design constraints but homeowners who can not afford to purchase estate homes will also have less choice. Nevertheless, housing selection is framed as an important way of broadly signaling choice in Celebration.

In her chapter, "The Fortress City: Privatized Spaces, Consumer Citizenship," Susan Christopherson (1994) argues that, in late capitalism, current understandings of 'diversity' are progressively mediated through acts of consumption; one of the consequences of this, she argues, is that it is through our consumer patterns that we, as citizens, are increasingly expected to express our political agency (414). Christopherson writes, "[t]he consumer identity has become all encompassing" (415). She argues that a variety of spaces once considered to be separate from consumerism, such as the political

sphere for example, are today re-worked in a rhetoric of 'consumer choice;' Christopherson calls the sort of citizenship this fosters *consumer citizenship*, arguing:

> To the consumer-citizen, politics is the practice of selecting from a given array of goods, not questioning and compromising to create a good. It is a private, individual process in which pre-existing individual preferences are expressed through votes of various kinds (415).

One of the ways Celebration sells itself is by inviting homeowners to avoid the sterile, unoriginal subdivisions of generica-USA by, instead, buying into the Celebration difference. Celebration is marketed as 'original' (while historically resonant), as 'personalized,' and as 'engaged' with American collective memories and culture.

Nonetheless, not only are residents limited to the pre-fab Disney-approved housing styles in Celebration, but they are also not able to 'choose otherwise.' An inherent lack of choice might seem like an obvious point to make given the fact that residents explicitly moved into Disney's town, and brought to life in the pre-fab 'town package,' but it is actually more important than it might seem at first glance. TCC makes quite a lot out of the fact that 'leading architects' had a hand in designing Celebration. So, while the architectural styles of Celebration may be marketed as 'diverse' (from Market Street through to the 'villages') all of the buildings have been custom designed by prominent professional designers and pre-approved developers. There is a *sameness* in the elitism of the buildings even as there is an appearance of *diversity* in the shapes themselves; while the different styles may connote variety on a superficial level the mono-architecturalism actually signals a radical lack of choice and difference. The marketing literature on the official website promotes 'variety' but upon closer examination the tightly managed 'diversity' in Celebration's home styles actually points to an underlying and pervasive homogeneity.

In the introduction to this section I pointed out that the homes available for sale in Celebration are pictured primarily in the residential section on the official website, but images of home-centered family life and the 'residential experience' are featured throughout celebrationfl.com. The way these images are displayed and the way they appear aesthetically offers another angle from which to read into Celebration's story-telling.

Images and Imaginings

The way the official website is designed and organized, and the way its central messages are enabled through the use of images of 'town scenes,' helps to set the stage for Disney's story of ideal community life in Celebrations (see Appendix A: number 2). The celebrationfl.com website is decorated with 'artistic conceptions' of town spaces, styles of homes for sale, and families at leisure; the way these images are constructed and laid out is central to the way the Celebration narrative unfolds on-line. The small pastel images interspersed with bits of descriptive text pop up throughout the website like pocket-sized watercolour-esque paintings of gentle domestic scenes (the sort that might be featured, for example, on picture postcards or kitchen calendars). Fragmentary vignettes of Celebration-life (that are used to stand in for a standardized vision of community life in general) are depicted in the strategic use of these images throughout the website. The paintings, if they are indeed paintings, all have a hazy/blurry quality to them, and this haziness can be read, I think, as symbolizing dreaminess. An element of fantasy is present in the soft-edged images that disappear into a background for the text

that appears on the various pages of the celebrationfl.com. The paintings help to illustrate an idea (both literally and metaphorically) that Celebration is a place where dreams blend seamlessly with real life; it is important to note, however, that this does not mean that what is in the text necessarily has an immediate or obvious connection to real life in the community (although a complete lack of connection also seems unlikely).

"Morning coffee on your front porch. An afternoon stroll to Market Street. Family evenings in the neighborhood park. *Welcome home*" (celebrationfl.com/residential/residential.html, emphasis added).

The dreaminess of the paintings contrasts sharply with a pressuposition that the rest of the world is harsh, edgy, and violently awake. The idealized imagery that is invoked creates a symbolic gap between itself and the (perceived) 'problematized' outside world - a world characterized as a place of 'poverty and crime,' a world where one might fear their neighbors, or fear walking out in the open on the streets of their own neighborhood at night. The images on the website suggest, through indirect 'contrast,' that Celebration is attuned to these problems (characterized broadly as the 'problems of urban living' in the 21st century) by appealing to the past as a 'better time.' The Celebration illusion offers the suggestion of 'safety' and 'tight-knit community living' in a small town setting as a 'solution' to 'negative' metropolitan social concerns. The pictures string together a story that invites 'urban refugees'[22] from all over the United States to partake in a small town culture of security and childlike innocence. Celebration invites us, as viewers of the official website, above all, to imagine a place where people are relaxed and comfortable. Celebration's imagery draws on bourgeois models of the private suburban retreat from the hostile and alienating world of work in

[22] The wording 'urban refugees' is my own; Celebration does not characterize its residents as such, nor have I seen this wording in print elsewhere. But, I am proposing that the folks invited to move to Disney's idealized small town might be understood discursively in this way (given the context in which the social

the public sphere[23]. The images on the site are not jarring, nor are they complicated (at least at first glance). There are pictures of families walking together, gardening together, elderly couples enjoying their 'golden years' with each other, and there is even a hazy image of a middle-aged man relaxing happily under the shade of an enormous tree in his backyard with a newspaper in hand (celebrationfl.com/residential/residential.html); every day peacefully looks like Saturday morning. The dominant message being portrayed here is that 'home' is where relaxation takes place; it is a place to regenerate and rejuvenate from the stressful Monday-to-Friday world of competition. 'Home' is a place for families to flourish and nurture each other. While the 'outside world' is characterized as alienating to families (and so-called 'family values') the home, conversely (as it is described in Celebration's official literature), is a place designed explicitly *for* families. Indeed, the emphasis on family life and 'the home' is a central feature of many images on celebrationfl.com.

The illustrations on this website also recall a particular artistic tradition in American expression: the aethetic style often associated with Norman Rockwell. In Rockwell's work small town life is idealized, and representations of families enjoying each other's company are featured dominantly in much of his work (see appendix A: number 1). An appeal to *the picturesqueness* of small town living in Rockwell's images

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world is specifically 'problematized', and the way Celebration is advertised on the official website as providing a refuge from it).

[23] The memory of "home" in the suburbs as a relaxing haven from the unfriendly and aggressive "work world" forgets that women perform the bulk of housework and emotional work in society and that "home" is only a refuge from work if the person doing the relaxing does not have to participate in the effort of up-keeping that place. This idea that "home is a haven" presupposes a heterosexual relationship characterized by an uneven division of labour; where a man is able to come home to a nice meal and comfortable surroundings after a long hard day out there in the "real world." This romanticized picture of the single family home in the suburbs forgets that this is often a site for women's oppression and the devaluation of their labour. Furthermore, the notion that home is "separate" from the work sphere is a relatively recent

is both literal and metaphorical. It is ironic then, or perhaps strategic, that a set of miniaturized paintings have been laid out on the Celebration website to stand in as representations for an 'ideal town' that is itself reminiscent (in some historically resonant sense) of an artistic tradition in portraying Small Town USA. However, while Rockwell's images often vividly sketch the 'characters' of small town life (i.e. the local barber or grocer), images on the official website paint a much more generalized picture of small town experience. While referring (to some extent) to a tradition in American painting of Small Town USA that Rockwell immortalized, Celebration's marketing literature (celebrationfl.com) simultaneously rejects this model by providing no references to particular individuals or their idiosyncratic 'stories' in its portrayal of small town life.

The use of paintings and artistic re-constructions of Celebration's streetscapes on the official website moves us away from examining particular issues and fragments of life as they might be captured by a photograph - the local events and happenings of a real place – and into an imaginary realm of static representation. The depiction of life in Celebration is fixed by its very reliance on paintings as a narrative anchor; the website images do not invite a gaze that would ask specific questions about individual people or places in town (i.e. who is that person? what does she do here? is that tree still there? has it grown? etc). The paintings provide, instead, a universal portrait of community life with an apparently 'omniscient' perspective. In contrast to the photograph, which is presupposed, at least, to capture some elements of 'real life,' the website paintings characterize an 'ideal life' that is not constrained by the idiosyncratic details of

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historical development in the West based on bourgeois sensibilities and lifestyle (Jackson 1985; Rybczynski 1986).

Celebration's daily goings-on. By employing artists rather than photographers to 'capture the spirit' of Celebration in fragmentary images, TCC is able to portray exactly what it wants to, right down to the smallest details (notably, the images of Celebration featured on the website suggest that *every day* is a *sunny day* in this ideal community, the sky is always bright blue and flecked with un-menacing fluffy white clouds).

In *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Roland Barthes (1981) notes that an important feature of photography is that it can not completely escape its relationship with the so-called 'real world.' The photograph, he argues, can not be understood as ontologically distinct from its referent; that is, it belongs to a class of *laminated objects* where a thing (the image) cannot be separated from its constituent parts (for the photograph this is the object to which the image refers) (6). Barthes writes:

> By nature, the Photograph... has something tautological about it: a pipe, here, is always intractably a pipe. It is as if the photograph always carries its referent with itself, both affected by the same funeral immobility, at the very heart of the moving world; they are glued together, limb by limb, like the condemned man and the corpse in certain tortures (5-6).

Given this connection with its referent, the photograph invites a way of seeing that inevitably creates the possibility for drawing viewers into a relationship with the object or scene being pictured. In the photograph, one might be moved to wonder about the referent in the image itself. Given this propensity to invite multiple possibilities and personal readings (and, in particular, opening up the space for question-asking about the 'real world' of the referent itself) some photographs have the potential to create a strong visceral pull for a particular viewer, and Barthes calls this pull the *punctum* (26). The *punctum* is generally idiosyncratic to the viewer and refers to a viewer's personal relationship with a specific photograph or an element of a photograph; one might experience a sensation of being deeply moved, confused, pierced, or even bruised by an

image one encounters (this is a relatively rare and special occurrence, Barthes notes) (26-27). The *punctum* moves beyond a generalized level of interpretation which Barthes calls the *studium*; the *studium* refers to a viewer's erudite appreciation (or lack thereof) of a photograph without actually drawing him or her into an intimate relationship with it (moving the viewer to serious introspection) (26-27). Barthes writes, "[t]he second element [the *punctum*] will break (or punctuate) the *studium*... A photographer's *punctum* is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)" (26-27).

The possibility of experiencing *punctum* is lost in the blurry, unspecific images featured on the official Celebration website. Viewers will not necessarily be drawn to think about the images as personally affective. Based on Barthes (1981) analysis of the affective power of photography am arguing that the celebrationfl.com images at stake here, for example, are less likely to draw viewers into a private engagement with the representation of the townscape of Celebration because they portray the town spaces and community life in a more fixed and formulaic way. The images on this website may produce a generalized 'feeling' of comfort and well-being for the viewer but there is less likelihood of finding unanticipated items in the *image itself* that will draw viewers into an intimate relationship with what is being pictured. This being said, this is not a categorical argument. I am not suggesting that it is impossible to be affected by the paintings on the official website, only that the amount of control the TCC-commissioned paintings have over what's being portrayed may lend themselves less to open interpretations. While the images on the official website seem to suggest that anyone could (and should) see themselves *in the picture* (an astute advertising strategy), the possibility of actually

seeing yourself or someone you know there is non-existent; the website simply does not feature any pictures of *identifiably real* people (or even animated caricatures of people, as might be observed in Rockwell's artistic portrayals of Small Town USA).

The experience of question-asking and the possibility for eliciting an emotional response to the images is potentially rendered impotent in the paintings featured on celebrationfl.com because no elements are unplanned, unpredictable, or refer to the unknown. Nothing reaches out and grabs me as a viewer, demands to be seen, or clashes with the holistic portrait of 'Celebration' that is narrated throughout the website as a whole; there is no internal disorder; there is no *punctum.* The medium of 'the painting' used on the website, therefore, is extremely important to TCC's message because the images tell us, as readers, that, instead of being made mutable by particular events or specific people, Celebration pre-exists any individual or their actions, and it pre-exists any possible event or social development. While this might appeal to people searching for a sense of comfort, this sanitized vision also conveys palpably oppressive undertones upon deeper consideration. An impression that I am left with, as an 'outsider' visiting celebrationfl.com, is that virtually anyone could live in Celebration and yet the "sense of community" would remain the same. (How can this be? How can Celebration *know* its community in advance? Is it really possible that by erecting particular architectural structures and by writing an appealing narrative about 'community life' this scripting will actually have a direct effect on the comportment and 'social being' of the people who live there?)[24]

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[24] While architects and designers may attempt to build-in the kinds of features that will create a desired community form, Foucault (2000) is skeptical. In an interview entitled "Space, Power and Knowledge" he argues that architecture itself cannot solve social problems, nor can it explicitly create space for either liberty or control. Foucault points out that even in an extremely controlled environment, like a

In contrast to formulaic images used on the official website, the resident-operated website (34747.org) continuously posts changing photographs of the town (see appendix A: number 5 and 6). Photographs on 34747.org feature such things as small details on downtown buildings, storefronts, and community special events; most of the photos also have a seasonal theme. The gallery is revised completely about once a month and there is often a string of comments on 34747.org/forum accompanying the arrival of the new images (see for example: 34747.org/forum, 15/03/04 "New Pictures on 34747.org"). This photo gallery actually refers to 'living scenes' in Celebration in a way that the official homepage does not. Because 34747.org uses photographs of Celebration, regardless of artistic intent, there may be more possibility for residents to identify with the spaces they see pictured on the website (and there is also a greater possibility for outside observers, like myself, to be moved or intrigued by the space). In fact, residents do seem to identify with these pictures and often express excitement on the forum with the arrival of new images in the photo gallery. Interestingly, however, over the six months that I have been visiting 34747.org and observing the shifting photo montage I have yet to come across an image that does not feature Celebration on a sunny day. Much like celebrationfl.com, it would seem that 34747.org also attempts to portray Celebration in its 'sunniest light'; between the official website and the residents' website a casual observer might be led to believe that there are simply no rainy days in this picture-perfect American town! These images are also tightly managed and controlled. As contrived as the photographs on 34747.org might be, though, they may still leave open the possibility for the experience of personal affect in the viewer. A viewer's

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concentration camp, there will still exist small nodes of resistance; similarly, liberty cannot be built into the architecture of a place, he writes, "liberty is a *practice*" (2000: 135).

interest could potentially be piqued, or a viewer could even be emotionally drawn-in, by an unintended feature in one of the photographs, which, as I have shown, is much more difficult to reconcile with the images on the official site where nothing in the manicured domestic scenes is left to chance (albeit not impossible).

Rather than featuring the mutable and shifting images posted on the resident's forum, which suggest some variability in the cadence of Celebration life, the official website paints a complete vision of what the space of Celebration *is* and even suggests what the experience of *being there* as a resident and community member should be about. Importantly, not only does the website illustrate what *has been* in its appeals to historical memory, but also it paints a deterministic picture of *what always will be*. In this sense, celebrationfl.com (and TCC who operates it) claims to have a sort of gods-eye-view of the community. It is a complete vision, and it does not leave open the possibility for alternative readings.

This notion of an objective and preconceived vision, based on a masculinist rationality,[25] is something feminist geographers have been attuned to and have problematized in their work on the built environment. For example, in her introduction to *Feminist Geography in Practice*, editor Pamela Moss (2002) writes:

> Feminists undertaking research in geography think about multiple aspects of knowledge through an array of relevant concerns. Geography as a discipline has privileged a masculine subject position and reproduced binaries such as male/female, culture/nature, and object/subject where more value has been placed on the first part of the dichotomy. Feminists in geography have followed the lead of several feminist philosophers in examining the underlying assumptions of who are the knowers, what can be known, and what is valued as knowable. (7)

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[25] "Masculinist rationality is a form of knowledge which assumes a knower who believes he can separate himself off from his body, emotions, values, past, and so on… the assumption of an objectivity, untainted by any particular social position allows this kind of rationality to claim itself as universal" (Rose quoted in Boys 1999: 206).

In "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," for example, Donna Haraway (1991) speaks, in particular, to the hegemony of the 'scientific impulse' in our society that assumes 'objective vision' to be the paragon of rationality. Haraway argues against this dominant scientific model and suggests, instead, that all vision is always already partial and perspectival. To recognize this perspectivalism in our own visualizing practices, she argues, is to enable a more ethical and reasonable understanding of how it is that we learn to see, and what it might mean to become accountable to this vision (190). The dominant epistemology based on the belief that everything can be (and ought to be) known and planned in advance, which assumes that 'complete vision' is indeed possible (and the ideal), is a modernist tendency[26] to which Haraway (among other feminist theorists) strongly objects (188-195). Feminist problematizations of the idealization of 'perfect vision' is important to the discussion of Celebration's website at hand because these concerns reveal the extent to which Celebration's *vision* itself privileges a scientific (masculinist) rationality.

The understanding of the social world that is normalized through Celebration's self-portrayal (on celebrationfl.com) as an ideal 'planned community environment' re-inscribes an 'objective vision' of social life and re-affirms the pro-scientific belief that spaces and places can be 'managed' in such a way that the communities who live there can themselves be controlled. Crowd control is, after all, one of the things for which the Walt Disney theme parks are most famous (Shearing and Stenning 1987). However, can

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[26] Zygmunt Bauman writes, '[t]he modern state is about settling the rules, defining patterns and maintaining them, administration, management, surveillance, and supervision; it is also about staving off or preventing all deviance from the pattern and all breaching of the rules, that is, everything haphazard, erratic, unanticipated and accidental" (2000: 76). The images on celebrationfl.com indeed reflect this modernist ideal of scientifically 'stilling' pictures, controlling meanings and eradicating all possible 'accidental' or uncontrolled features of images that might invite interpretations other than what TCC explicitly intends.

a community of residents really be 'managed' in the same way that a crowd of tourists can? Will the residents of Celebration continue to buy-into the 'magic' of the imagineered scenes they are presented with? As Bauman (2000) points out in "Sociological Enlightenment - For Whom, About What?," if social scientists have learnt anything over the last few hundred years of struggle to define sociology as a 'legitimate science,' it is that human beings are not the same kind of 'thing' as are other phenomena of the natural world that make up the fodder of scientific study (73). "The humanities," Bauman writes, "are not the immature younger brothers of 'better established' or 'better equipped' brands of science. They are an entirely different kind of activity altogether. They will never be like the natural sciences" (74). Nevertheless, he notes, 'modernity' set itself about the task of ordering the human universe based on a scientific rationale, and legions of social scientists, philosophers, political leaders (and, I would add, city planners) happily took up the cause (77). The design of celebrationfl.com masks the reality of highly administered space and the underlying modern assumption about the rational calculability of the social sphere behind a hazy veneer of dreamy streetscape iconography featured on the official website. Upon closer inspection, however, celebrationfl.com really provides little detail about anything else.

"I really want to see us reach outside of the box that the imagineers put us in" (chat: 34747.org/ forum, 09/04/03, "Pino-Celebration City").

The fact is, celebrationfl.com is not styled or organized, in any way, like a standard municipal website; this is significant because celebrationfl.com goes to great lengths to establish that it is, in fact, "the official Celebration website" (this pops up on every page). Traditional city websites typically include links to information about who the current government is, how municipal services are organized (i.e. what day garbage

pick-up is), what the local bylaws are, what job openings might be available with the city/town, and there is usually even a space for a description of the local weather (both daily averages and yearly trends)[27]. Celebrationfl.com does not provide *any* of this information. As I mentioned above, in terms of the local weather it would appear that every day is a 'sunny day' in Celebration (unless otherwise specified – i.e. "Now Snowing Nightly"). Similarly, there is no indication about how the community is run on an administrative level, there are no indications given about what the local laws (or covenants) are or to whom they apply, and from month to month nothing ever seems to change. The Celebration website essentially reads as an extended marketing brochure for TCC (with most of the emphasis placed on advertising available housing and the 'many' shopping opportunities on Market Street); celebrationfl.com does not appear to be organized as a resource for the residents (although, interestingly, it purports to do just this by featuring a section devoted exclusively to 'local community events'). The website is an extremely static place. The only elements of this virtual space that I have observed to change (on a semi-regular basis) since I began visiting it over a year ago in the fall of 2002 are: the calendar of events (an image of the current community event is always featured on the first page of the website), and the incremental increase in the starting prices for the homes available in town. A sense of *timelessness* is underscored in reading across the 'presences' and 'absences' of various elements on the official website. The collage of images and text gathered together on celebratonfl.com position Celebration as a historically resonant community, not only because TCC seems to suggest that the 'past' can neatly be read in and through this town, but because the future

[27] See, for example, the City of Edmonton website at: gov.edmonton.ab.ca for an illustration of a 'typical' municipal website design.

of Celebration (and of the 'America' to which it refers) is a future where everything will remain the same in perpetuity; it is a future that the 'past' has in fact guaranteed.

The closest thing to a functioning on-line resource board for Celebration residents that I have been able to find appears to be "The Front Porch" (celebration.fl.us), which is operated by CROA (the homeowner's association). Notably, since Celebration is neither a 'city' nor a 'town,' and is essentially run like a business, residents must address their concerns through CROA rather than using the 'traditional' route of appealing to elected officials. Although "The Front Porch" appears to offer more information to residents about mundane matters (like how recycling is organized in Celebration) the website in its entirety is not available for viewing by unregistered (non-resident) users. There are many sections where access to "The Front Porch" is restricted and, contrary to a typical government-run site, much of the really nitty-gritty information (such as discussions about the possibility of incorporating Celebration) remain hidden; this added level of 'secrecy' reinforces the message that Celebration is a private space and not a publicly run community (at least in the traditional sense).

Drawing on these issues, the following section will take a closer look at the way Celebration, the 'ideal' privatized Small Town USA, is organized on an administrative level.

Ice-Cream Democracies

> Celebration voters want their favorite candidates licked during this year's elections. That's because voters are going to the polls to decide which ice cream gets the "thumbs up" to represent the flavor of the community as "Celebration" ice cream... Herman's [ice cream parlor] manager Terry Finley is excited about Celebration's ice cream election and believes that the idea of democratically selecting an ice cream named after Celebration is long overdue. After all, Celebration residents and merchants are

commemorating the community's fifth anniversary this year. (celebrationfl.com/pressroom/011004.html)

On October 4th 2001, less than one month after the 9/11 terrorist attacks that shocked many and initiated an American-led global 'war on terror' framed by the vehement pro-democracy rhetoric of the current American president, George W. Bush, TCC posted a press-release on the official Celebration website that read: "*Celebration Voters Get the 'Scoop' on Elections*" (celebrationfl.com/pressroom/11004.html). This press release symbolizes a very interesting gesture at an extremely significant moment in time. There are three pivotal ways that I have been thinking about, and seeking an explanation for, the content and timing of this press release. The first (and I think most likely) explanation, is that while the world news media was reeling over the effects and consequences of 9/11 for the United States and the world, TCC's 'pressroom' decided, instead, to continue along in its 'small town routine' of planned events as though nothing of consequence had happened to Celebration. This is the 'head in the sand' explanation: by ignoring 9/11, TCC validated the status quo and continued to bolster the message that Celebration is inherently a 'safe space' isolated from the harsh traumas of the outside world.[28] A second explanation is that, in the face of an attack on America and 'American values,' TCC chose, in the first moments of the aftermath of 9/11, to act in defense of 'the American way of life' by responding to official appeals from the White House to 'continue on with life as normal;'[29] not wavering from the planned community 'election event' was one way of re-affirming the value of the 'American ideals' perceived to be in

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[28] This explanation also reverberates with the sense of *timelessness* that is created about Celebration on the official website.

[29] Readers may recall that these appeals from Washington emphasized, in particular, the need for Americans to continue shopping. Consumption was framed as the best way to express American patriotism in the face of foreign attack.

jeopardy. A third explanation is that TCC purposely decided to push ahead in its 'elections' in order to demonstrate support for the 'democratic values of the free world' that were understood to be under assault; since Celebration broadly promotes itself as *the ideal American small town*, TCC sought to display 'conspicuously ideal American values' by pushing ahead with its 'election' (since *democracy itself* was framed by those in positions of power as 'under threat'). All three explanations are plausible and relevant to Celebration's self-construction as a perfect American town.

Coming back to the press release featured above, the line that stands out most for me is: "Finley is excited about Celebration's ice cream election and believes the idea of democratically selecting an ice cream named after Celebration is long overdue" (ibid). The notion that 'ice cream democracy' is long overdue is ironic (to say the least) because Celebration itself is not run on any democratic principles at an administrative level. It is a corporate community where residents, constituted as 'home owners,' are not invited to participate in any *real way* in the decision making process. TCC runs Celebration like a business, and retains the authority to make all final decisions about the community structure, architecture, covenant regulations, further development/expansion possibilities, allowable retail outlets, and ultimately even what the 'fate' of the community itself will be. The idea that TCC imagined holding 'elections' would be a good way to commemorate Celebration's fifth anniversary is fascinating because the community does not seem to put much stock in democracy in any practical way. The fact that democracy is recognized as symbolically important to the commemoration of a significant anniversary for a small town (in a town that is not itself democratically run) signals a

level of dissonance with regards to the nature of the 'ideal' Celebration is trying to promote.

"CROA is really just a homeowners association of steroids. It doesn't even represent the apartment dwellers, who make up about 1/3 of the population. It doesn't have the authority over the downtown nor commercial space... It doesn't have the authority to represent the residents in regards to school issues. It does have the ability to improve 'amenities' and sends a representative to the CJC [Celebration Joint Committee], which seems to be as close to local government as we've got. In short, however, CROA is capable of fixing everything that *isn't* wrong with Celebration" (chat: 34747.org/forum, 31/12/03, "What is TCC Today?").

Because Celebration is not a democracy, the democratic impulse (generally understood to be an essential component of Small Town USA life) is played out in other ways. For example, TCC's ice cream election gives residents the illusion of having some (albeit superficial) control over the town (and playing into the stereotypes about 'traditional' small town life), while ultimately, this shallow gesture serves to provide residents with the *feeling* of democracy without actually undermining the *real* power structure at work in Celebration. On another level, this 'election' might also be understood as making a mockery out of the 'traditional democratic forms' Celebration's governing structure explicitly turns away from by trivializing the notion of relevant 'voting power' altogether. In a *New York Times Magazine* article entitled "Town Building is no Mickey Mouse Business," journalist Mike Pollan (1997) notes that one of the ways residents seem to overcome their alienation from the undemocratic power structure is by participating in local community groups to express civic sentiment in Celebration (xzone.net/celebration/nytimes971214/article1.html). Because Celebration 'harks back' to a time of a more 'civic-minded way of life,' many residents join the Celebration Rotary Club, for example, to express this pseudo-democratic impulse since, ironically, there is no real government with which to engage (Pollan 1997).

Interestingly, from an architectural perspective, the town hall in downtown Celebration is one of the most prominent 'public' structures. Its distinctive design, large size, and central placement in the main square marks the town hall as a significant structure; this physical eminence, though, is purely aesthetic, which, again, signals a certain dissonance with the nature of political life in the privatized town. Because there is no government in Celebration, the town hall is used principally as office space for CROA instead of housing a mayor and governing council[30]. CROA is understood to be the principle outlet for residents to voice their concerns, but, as legal expert on homeowner's associations Evan McKenzie notes, "it's absolute top- down control… The homeowners are powerless against the association [CROA] and the association is powerless against Disney. I can't imagine anything more undemocratic" (quoted in Pollan 1997). Furthermore, despite the fact that homeowners have recently gained the power to elect representatives to CROA (in 2003), TCC continues to retain the largest voting share (as well as veto power) in the decision making process, meaning that Disney has the ultimate say over what will be done in Celebration for as long as it wants to keep control.

Resident representation in Celebration is also limited by the fact that CROA only represents the interests of residents who *own* their homes and does not provide any representation for the many renters who live in town. This signals, on yet another level, that to become a full member of the Celebration community one must first and foremost be a property owner. In fact, property ownership is seen as the key to political power in

[30] TCC advertises the town hall in the following way: "Town Hall, the information center of Celebration, keeps track of events, classes, recreational activities and news. For any resident with a question, a problem, or an idea, Town Hall is the place to begin. Parks and recreation programs and residential association activities are coordinated through Town Hall" (celebrationfl.com/community/cornerstones.html).

Celebration (as muted as that power may be). Given the fact that not all Americans can afford to own a home, Celebration's self-representation as an 'ideal community' reiterates the upper-middle class pro-consumer message that 'worthy community members' are those people who can afford to buy their way in. The central idea being communicated here is that people with more money to spend and invest locally are ultimately more valuable as members of society.

Recently, however, there have been rumblings among residents who would ideally like to see Celebration become a *real town*; this desire *might* even become a possibility given the fact that Disney has been trying to distance itself from the direct operation of the community over the last few years. Individual residents may have agreed to the terms Disney set before them when they first moved in and bought into the Celebration philosophy (symbolized by the requirement that each resident sign the 'declaration of covenants'), but as complaints continue to mount many residents are expressing more collective interest in self- government. In fact, some residents are currently attempting to organize the incorporation of Celebration as a municipality, which is the legal requirement if Celebration is to become a 'real town'; if it were incorporated, Celebration would have to be run by an elected governing body instead of by TCC's corporate-dictatorship style (or by an over-inflated homeowners' association). Amid

Chat A: "I think incorporation will be good for Celebration – as soon as possible and with the best of legal representation."

Chat B: "Incorporation should happen… it is the only way for us to truly control our destiny. It also opens up many tremendous possibilities for us" (chat: 34747.org /forum, 12/08/03, "Pro-Celebration City").

"I believe the plan for the *next* five years needs to be 'resident empowerment.' We need to become more assertive in the management of the *entire* town, which includes *all* the [five] cornerstones. There is no reason that we should accept so little input into those things that rely on us for support" (chat: 34747. org/forum, 21/06/03, "Sale of Town Center & Golf Course").

a generalized sense of discontent and shifting desires, rumblings for change have been emanating from many residents over the last year (2002-2003) on the 34747.org/forum; many residents feel that Disney mislead them into believing that a corporation could do the best job of running a small town. For example, two residents exchanged the following commentary on the forum:

> Chat A:
> It's kind of a shock to move somewhere marketed as a progressive, cohesive small town with integrated technology and human services, and instead find a huge attrition rate, problem schools, and a non-representational management system in place of true government.
>
> Chat B (reply):
> I believe the many people who moved here because of Disney's influence believed that "the Disney way of management" was preferable to corrupt elected government. They envisioned a quasi-government that would incorporate Disney values – "Respect, Appreciate, and Value Everyone," work for the common good while respecting individual choices, value their opinions ("guest satisfaction measurement"), perform impeccably ("performance excellence"), correct problems ("service recovery"), etc., values that could conceivably be applied more widely to political society and facilitate better civil society, thus improving their own lives while establishing a model for the development of better communities. The "Celebration Journal" documents much of that. Unfortunately, since Disney is no longer Disney, that just didn't happen[31] (34747.org/forum, 03/01/04, "What is TCC Today?").

Interestingly, at the moment when residents are beginning to initiate serious discussions about political organization and have begun re-thinking the best strategy for the future of their town, Disney is poised to pull out of Celebration in persistently undemocratic ways. Very recently (December 2003), TCC sold Celebration's town center to Lexin Capital, a New York based investment group, without letting residents in on the discussion or the decision-making process as to who would take over the town center ownership (Goodbough 2004; Hunt, 2004; 34747.org/forum, 25/01/04 "Lex-Us"). During the months leading up to the final sale, TCC was decidedly tight-lipped about the

[31] Chat B is referring here, I think, to the recent resignation (12/03) of Roy E. Disney from the Disney Board of Directors due to irreconcilable differences with the current management and, specifically, with the initiatives of CEO Michael Eisner. Since Roy's resignation there are no longer any "Disney's" working for the Disney Corporation. See Roy Disney's new website for resignation letters at: www.SaveDisney.com.

whole affair, leaving residents to speculate in the dark about the future of their town. Rumors circulated on 34747.org/forum that the downtown had indeed been sold to investors from New York, but residents were unable to get a definitive answer from TCC until January 2004 even though the deal actually 'went through' in December 2003 (as early as April 2003, some residents were speculating on 34747.org/forum that a deal to sell the town was in the works – this was before the news that the town center was on the market even went public). In a *New York Times* article printed only days before the transfer of ownership was made public, journalist Abby Goodbough (2004) writes:

"The "word on the street" from multiple sources, both in and out of town, is that downtown is for sale and TCC will be gone by September [2003]; nice that they are so up front with us about that, but consistent with their previous behavior" (chat: 34747.org /forum, 06/04/03, "Pino-Celebration City").

> The Walt Disney Company, which built Celebration just outside the Walt Disney World gates in the 1990's and has been the planned community's benefactor and strict parent, put the town center on the market last June. The pastel-colored shops and restaurants that make up Celebration's squeaky-clean vista will soon change hands, and as a sale is negotiated in secret, residents and business owners are wondering who will take Disney's place, and what life will be like without the Mouse. (nytimes.com/2004/01/16/national/16TOWN.html)

The transfer of ownership away from TCC includes: 6 restaurants, 94, 000 square feet of office space, 16 retail shops, 105 apartments and three parcels of land outside the town center (Goodnough 2004; Hunt 2004; celebrationfl.com/pressroom). Lexin Capital will essentially take over the operation of almost all of Celebration's main public spaces, leaving residents with a new company to contend with but not necessarily a new style of 'town management.'

At a time when residents are trying to initiate serious discussions about potential 'independence from the Mouse' it is quite telling that the sale of the downtown (and the subsequent handing over of power from one elite group to another) took place behind closed doors. TCC's covert sale of the town center to an 'undisclosed buyer' appears to

have provoked a bit of anxiety for Celebration residents (as I have observed on 34747.org/forum) but not, notably, a collective sense of outrage. In general, residents appear resigned to the fact that Celebration is not a democracy, so they seem to be focusing more on finding out what the new owners will do for the community and what changes, if any, will take place under the new ownership rather than working to change the system altogether. There is a general hope, it seems, that in exchanging one corporation for another more resident desires might be fulfilled (i.e. having a hardware store and a bakery open up in town). In the end, though, residents are really still at the mercy of the new investment company (whose main goal is, of course, to make money in its newest real estate venture). In response to TCC's official disclosure of the downtown sale in January 2004, one resident (who moved to Celebration in 1996) had this to say: "I just hope they open up the downtown to more resident-friendly businesses… I don't know what to expect. I'm taking a wait-and-see attitude" (quoted in Hunt 2004).

"I wonder if the company that buys out TCC will make rents reasonable and reorient the businesses to allow more 'small town' services that will appeal to residents and tourists alike. Wouldn't that be nice? *Celebration's theme is 'small town' after all.* We could tweak the reputation to 'academic and arts oriented small town'. Bring on the book stores and bagel shops!" (34747.org/forum, 19/11/03, "Tourists, Ugh??," emphasis added).

Upon discovering that the town center was put up for sale some of the chatters on 34747.org/forum lamented the fact that residents were not given the opportunity to bid for the purchase of the downtown themselves:

> Chat A:
> It's a shame the residents of Celebration did not put a bid in to buy downtown.
>
> Chat B (reply):
> It's an even bigger shame that the residents of Celebration were probably not given a chance to put a bid to buy downtown.
>
> Chat C (reply):

> I recall the asking price of Celebration Downtown was: $26,000,000.00 - $28,000,000.00, not exactly chump change. (34747.org/forum, 20/11/03, "Tourists Ugh??")

Although, as "Chat C" points out, Celebration residents would likely not have been able to come up with the capital required to purchase the downtown for themselves, the central idea being expressed here is that, should the residents want to have some real control over the daily operation of Celebration, literally 'purchasing' the town is seen as one of the most viable options. There is no reason to believe that a group of investors from the community would inherently provide better 'town management' than an outside investment group, but the intuition, among the few residents discussing the pending transfer of ownership in Celebration on 34747.org/forum, seems to suggest that the best way to try to gain some control over the way things work in Celebration is to have the largest 'voting share' and not, as would be the case in a traditional democracy, just a 'vote.' It follows, then, that the more money one is willing (or able) to invest in Celebration the more 'voice' one will have in the way things are run around town. This is clearly undemocratic. The idea that one can increase one's voting power by 'investing' more money might be the way corporations dealing with stockholders operate, but not the way democratically-run governments are *ideally* designed to function. Of course, Celebration has no real government to speak of (unless we consider the homeowners association to be a kind of consumer oriented proto-government), and the community is not run on democratic principles in any meaningful way. If Celebration is not a democracy then why worry about how its residents might prefer to wrestle for the 'choice' to determine the structure of their community (whether it is consumer oriented or not)?

I think we ought to worry about the way Celebration signifies on an organizational level because it is held up (by TCC and by some residents) as a model Small Town USA in a 'USA' that is currently engaged in aggressively 'promoting democracy' all over the world (especially post-9/11). In this politically volatile time when the United States is fighting its "war on terror" on at least two international fronts (Afghanistan and Iraq) in the name of 'freedom and democracy' this contradiction is particularly alarming. How can Celebration, an undemocratically run development operated by a profit-motivated multinational corporation, be lauded as a model for town building for the rest of the country and the world? While the "pro-democracy/anti-terror" propaganda war rages on Celebration is consistently held up as a model community development for America and the World (at least by TCC and Disney).

Here is a very quick recapitulation of the mixed messages being sent out by Celebration: a) Celebration is run by Disney in a decidedly non-democratic fashion (residents have no control); b) shortly after 9/11 in October 2001 TCC promotes an outlet for 'democratic spirit' to celebrate the community's fifth anniversary by encouraging residents to participate in an ice-cream election (and goes so far as to release this event as an official press release); c) in 2002 the residents begin to seriously discuss the possibility of incorporating Celebration and they gain the ability to elect representatives to CROA in 2003; d) the town center is secretly sold to another corporation in late 2003 leaving residents confused and unsure about the future of the community and the role they have to play in it; e) Celebration continues to actively promote itself as a model for community development and civic life in the United States.

These messages animate an inherent contradiction. Celebration can not be *both* an undemocratically run corporate community *and* a model for American style democracy. Or can it? Perhaps the model of neo-liberal democracy that the United States promotes both at home and its international policy actually *does* foster an abdication of traditional democratic forms in favour of an agglomeration of 'municipal style governments' structured by financially motivated 'common interest developments'[32]. In their book chapter, "An Archival Probe," Sanford Kwinter and Daniela Fabricius (2002) note that 42 million Americans live in communities run by homeowners associations (9 million of whom live in gated communities). They write: "America's 200,000 homeowner associations are rapidly converting from business organizations and claiming status as independent cities" (568). Celebration is one such development seeking incorporation as 'private community' in a reflection of a larger trend taking place with increasing frequency all over the United States. This move towards privatized government in favour of the individual consumer's desire to pursue profit and safeguard property values, Kwinter and Fabricius note, is also state-sanctioned (at least by a powerful few who hold an enormous amount of influence in the agenda of 'the state'). They explain:

> In 1994 Republican House Speaker Newt Gingrich and a group of fellow conservatives published a program envisioning a "renewed" republican America founded on the principles of individual liberty and the sanctity of the American family. These institutions were to be guaranteed through the privatization of public goods and spaces, a dramatic limitation of the scope of government (and of the political process in general), and the militant right to security and vigorous defense. The siege mentality it fostered

[32] 'Common interest developments,' or 'gated housing developments' to put it another way, are motivated, Christopherson writes, by an interest in "protect[ing] property values by maintaining the social homogeneity of the development, by restricting individual property rights and by providing extensive security and services to commonly held property" (1994: 412).

> was enormously influential even if it did not pass either judicious scrutiny or democratic test. It didn't have to. Despite the program's ultimate failure at the polls, the rising "Washington consensus" on social and economic liberalization essentially turned the development of urban life and substance in America over to the near-unbridled march of market forces. (567)

Celebration, which was actively being developed from about 1994 onward, seems to fall in line with this thinking and, in fact, symptomatic of a larger trend towards an increasingly consumer-driven, market-oriented, minimalist and privatized style of governance in the United States. While Celebration might appear, at first, to be extraordinary and unique, the style of 'community management' it espouses actually provides a perfect model for the 'common sense political economy' that seeks to naturalize civil governance based on the neo-liberal market forces favoured by the West in late modernity.

"Disney's original vision was to create a model American town. With more than 2,500 homes and 8,000 residents, that goal has been achieved... Often cited as the most successful example of community development, Celebration is a model for new towns and communities worldwide" (celebrationfl.com/press_room/040121.htm).

If Celebration is indeed *the* model for American civil society in the post-9/11 new-world-order, and an exemplification of the hegemony of American-style governance in the world, it stands to reason that the 'democracy' being exported around internationally might best be understood, to some extent, as the proliferation of homogenized 'ice-cream democracies.' While 'voters' might indeed be invited to help select the flavour-of-the-month, someone (or something) else entirely is determining the menu.

Post-Script

Navigating the Narratives

> Beneath the surface, the signal qualities of the contemporary urban landscape are not playfulness but control, not spontaneity but manipulation, not interaction but separation. The need to manage urban space, and particularly to separate different kinds of people in space is a pre-eminent consideration in contemporary urban design, matched only by the ever-present requirement to gratify the egos of developers. The soft images of spontaneity are used to disguise the hard reality of administered space (Christopherson 1994: 409).

This project raises a variety of issues and traverses different theories to help illuminate the ways in which Celebration is represented on the Internet, both in its self-representations on the official Celebration website (celebrationfl.com), and in the way the community has been received and re-presented on-line[1] by an array of other 'readers' (including some of the residents who live there themselves). I examine both how Celebration is constituted as a 'historical space' by means of the cultural myths of particular 'American collective memories' of Small Town USA and how Celebration is constituted as a 'capitalist project' imagineered by the Disney Corporation for its own financial gain while attending to the dichotomous dynamic that underlies this either/or representational model. What started out as a fairly straightforward inquiry (I thought) quickly expanded as I discovered how multiple, and often contradictory, 'stories' can be read together in the narrative productions of Celebration. As I have tried to reiterate throughout this thesis, I do not presume to tell every story, nor am I able to. Due to practical space constraints, and a desire to explore as fully as possible each of the issues

[1] There are a few sources referred to in this thesis through which I take a look at the way Celebration is represented in print (rather than on the Internet) and these sources are noted in the in-text citations as well as in the reference list. The bulk of this examination, however, is focused on conducting a discourse analysis of Internet representations; where printed material has added to and/or helped to further develop my overall analysis, however, I have included the relevant sources.

raised, I have been forced to make some choices about what stories to tell, and from which angles, in order to begin answering the questions I set out for myself in the introduction. While I center my exploration and analysis on the two central discourses described above, the stories I draw on to illuminate these discourses do not represent the only narratives at work, nor do they address the only issues at stake. Although I am not arguing that the discourses of 'history' and 'capital' I have articulated are the *only* underlying themes in Celebration's production, I have formulated my analysis around an examination of them because they recur as important and meaningful subtexts to the way Celebration is both read and produced in the series of on-line representations with which I have been working. As such, it is most fruitful to conceive of this thesis project in terms of providing a perspectival snapshot of Celebration at an arrested moment in time, rather than as rendering a complete and/or finished portrait. As I type these words, life is changing in Celebration; like any social space it is mutable and affected by the infinite contingencies and developments that life presents.

It is indeed because of this inherent mutability that Celebration's self-representation, on its official website in particular, is so important to consider. Celebrationfl.com presents a finished and polished vision of the community both on aesthetic and social terms, while life in Celebration, and the project of 'rationally' configuring the *planned community*, actually seems to be a lot more complicated. As I have shown, TCC's emphasis on the 'complete vision' of Celebration can be observed in the way standardized 'American town traditions' and certain 'historically-minded' architectural forms are woven into the fabric of 'town life,' and indeed come to stand out as symptomatic of a particular ideological conception of the 'ideal community form' of

US culture in late modernity (albeit a strongly 'Disnified' conception, which is not an insignificant point). This vision can also be observed in the way the official website is itself styled and organized, both in how it statically represents the 'space' and 'community' of Celebration and also in the way the website emphasizes consumerism to the neglect of many other aspects of community life (with its almost exclusive devotion to promoting real estate sales and shopping opportunities on Market Street throughout its many pages). It is indeed through its appeal to 'the historical' in Celebration that the project of selling the town, in real estate terms, is accomplished by TCC. An appeal to 'historical memory' is fostered through the selective integration of cultural myths and icons (such as the interwoven myths of origin explored in the first section, and the icon of a normative 'Main Street USA' grappled with over the second chapter) and used to help legitimize and lend some historical authority to the Disney project as it is articulated in Celebration.

This 'selling,' though, is not simply taking place in economic terms. History is simultaneously remembered and sold to a contemporary American audience in and through the sorts of 'capitalist productions' the Walt Disney Corporation undertakes in its own projects. The issue is not simply as straightforward as arguing that TCC employs a pre-given set of 'American historical memories' of Small Town USA and selectively re-integrates this history into Celebration as it is deemed to fit. The way 'history' is produced is, in fact, cultural and can not be neatly separated from the way in which this 'history' appears in 'historically-oriented' productions like Celebration; in a capitalist culture (like our own in North America in the 21st century), the way histories are remembered, memorialized and integrated into everyday life cannot be conceived of in

isolation from these broader social and economic forces. That is to say, Celebration is indeed constituted by an appeal to the 'historical' in American culture but also can not itself be reckoned as distinct from the ways in which it is produced. This highlights the co-constitutive nature of 'memory projects' and the means by which they are brought to bear, centering the debate on the way historical memories are interpreted, shaped, commodified, consumed and experienced.

As I suggested in the introduction to this thesis, Celebration can not be conceived separately from its Disney parent. Even though TCC has recently sold the town center to a new investment/management company, and the residents who live there appear to be increasingly interested in political autonomy (in some form or another), Celebration will likely always resonate, on an important level, as 'the town that Disney built.' The association, I am arguing, runs deeper than the fact that Disney came up with the original idea and put forward the initial capital to get the project started. Celebration embodies the ideals of the American 'good life' that Disney has had a hand in shaping and institutionalizing in the American imagination. Celebration is, in an important sense, an imagineered space that integrates Disney's creative historical-architecture and story-telling strategies while gathering and localizing an accumulation of diverse 'storylines' that the entertainment company has been telling and re-telling in its various productions on a continuous basis over the decades. Most significantly, Celebration is enabled by Disney-perpetuated 'myths of origin' that locate a white, Christian, heteronormative middle-class 'utopia' in the antigeographical space of the new frontier.

Celebration is indeed a *real lived space* where people have chosen to relocate, and as such, it can not reductively be conceived of as just another clichéd 'imagineered

project' staged by Disney, or even worse, labeled as a totally 'inauthentic space'[2] (implying, perhaps, that the people who live there are also somehow 'inauthentic,' or at the very least that they are 'cultural dupes' of Disney's capitalist mind-control). The residents who live in Celebration are not just abstract 'Americans' living out an abstracted version of the 'American Dream,' but real people with idiosyncratic life histories and perspectives. This creates an interesting tension. On its official website, TCC actively leads its 'readers' to believe that Celebration pre-exists any particular individuals and their actions, because of the supposed universality of the 'American traditions, values and history' it draws on, but it is the residents themselves who re-interpret this vision and put the many 'historically minded' community events (like 'town traditions') into practice, thereupon making realizing them. It is not enough that TCC plan town parades and festivals, the people of Celebration actually have to show up and partake – they are an integral part of the performance, and thus, some of the responsibility for what Celebration is does lie with them. Resident participation further develops the idea that conceiving of 'historical traditions' is not simply a matter of re-inscribing a pre-given set of cultural 'memories,' but that these 'memories' must be actively engaged both on institutional and individual levels in order to be brought to life and made meaningful.

Rethinking Celebration

Across the fragments of 'Celebration' presented throughout this project emerge some interesting thematic repetitions that suggest different ways in which Disney-

[2] In his article "A Town Called Celebration" featured in the November 2003 edition of *The Ecologist*, for example, journalist/author David Boyle calls Celebration "as fake as fake can be" (2003: 37).

popularized narratives of the 'American good life' can be read in relation to the two central themes of 'historical memory' and 'capitalism' that have been described thus far. In many ways, however, this project raises more questions than it answers. In order to come to terms with the open-ended nature of this thesis, I will navigate this final section by first tying together some of the aspects of Celebration's self-representation and wider reception that I have explored throughout this project, finishing with what I believe to be some of the most provoking questions that have arisen in the process of my research.

I started chapter one with a look at the frontier myth and argued that the proliferation of this myth, as an anchoring point for American collective memories, has been taken up by Celebration in its own self-presentation on the official website as a strategy to help make sense of the town. Also, the myth of the frontier, and of pioneerism more specifically, is widely scripted in city planning discourses as a way to lend some authority (through an appeal to the 'historical') to urban 'reclamation' and 'renewal' projects that favour the *rich* over the *poor* (or the *privileged* over the *marginalized*, to put it another way) in a way that resonates with a deeper metaphorical contest between the *civilized* and the *savage*. This dichotomy is framed by frontier mythologies that draw upon the events played out on the colonial theater of North American since its troubled (and troubling) 'discovery' in 1492. The carving-up of social space, and of determining which social actors belong in which spaces in particular, is based on this uneven dualism and serves to justify (in many cases) existing social inequalities. As urban spaces are increasingly shaped and negotiated to meet the needs of those in positions of power (exemplified by the many ongoing urban gentrification projects that push lower income residents out of established neighborhoods, as is the case on the Lower East Side of New

York city exemplified in Smith's analysis), the myth of the frontier perpetuates the increasing separation of people in space based on factors such as social class, ethnicity, and access to financial and cultural capital today (in a way that resonates 'historically'). Celebration both reflects and is symptomatic of a larger ongoing trend in the United States towards the privatization of the so-called 'public sphere' that exacerbates the unequal division of people in unevenly developed space.

Furthermore, the frontier myth paints a linear and deterministic model for the ordering of historical memory in the public sphere, leaving little space for 'thinking/remembering' in ways that may contest or clash with the dominant frames of remembrance. The discourse of the frontier myth serves to mediate the past in 'historically minded' community planning/design projects (like Celebration, for example) and sets up this 'history' as an anchor for the present and future in a way that frames the 'march of progress' (symbolized by the metaphorical movement of 'civilization' across the 'new frontier') as an *inevitable feature* of social movement across time. The 'wild' is tamed on the new frontier parallel to the way the 'past' is managed and ordered to fit in with today's needs and common understandings in 'historically-minded' development projects. This appeal to the myth of the frontier gives a linear model of 'progress' substantial cultural weight, especially as it is taken up in Celebration's own story-telling and philosophy (which itself draws on the additional cultural legitimacy of being associated with Disney). This discourse also points to the fact that 'progress' towards increasing capitalist hegemony is the dominant lens through which 'success' is read and understood.

Celebration is made sense of in many on-line productions by invoking this frontier mythology. By drawing on metaphors of 'health and sickness' in the built environment, for example, dominant urban planning discourses, articulated by Kemmis (1997) in *FORUM Magazine* (flahum.org/Forum/Summer_97), paint the development of the privatized 'small town' enclave as an ideal for the way in which 'public spaces' ought to be organized into 'appropriate' and 'well-functioning' community forms. This language of 'healthy' community planning is contrasted with a language of 'unhealthy' *discourses of disorder* associated with 'suburban sprawl' and 'urban decay.' What Celebration is 'healthily progressing towards,' however, puts into question some of the dearly held underlying assumptions about the nature of American culture and society; for example, as I articulated in the final section of chapter two, that local democracy is an integral and necessary feature of public life in Small Town USA.

In turning away from 'traditional democracy' and towards a style of 'community management' that privileges private business to act in the 'best interest' of the society it manages within its borders, common consumerism is highlighted as the central axis from which rational community-building should proceed, and 'consumer power' is conflated with the right to 'vote' as a way to get things done and make decisions collectively. In this model, government is best understood as a 'private affair,' responsible only to the needs and desires of controlling business interests and stockholders (whether they are homeowners' associations, real estate investment corporations, or multinational entertainment companies) rather than to voting populations. This leaves a serious problem of a 'lack of voice' for those in society who cannot afford to 'vote' with their dollars. In a consumer-oriented public sphere there is a reduction in legitimate space for

those who are not consumers or those who otherwise do not fit into the privatized model. As Steven Flusty (1997) notes in "Building Paranoia:"

> Traditional public spaces are increasingly being supplanted by privately produced (although often publicly subsidized), privately owned and administered spaces for public aggregation, that is, spaces of consumption, or most commonly, malls. In these new "post-public" spaces, access is predicated upon ability to pay (51).

While we can observe the effect that the privatization of certain social space has on various non-consumers in 'post-public spaces' (such as Smith's (1992) example of the eviction of the homeless from Tompkins Square Park) we can also observe this ideology at work in the way 'public spaces,' and indeed the way 'the public' itself, are conceived of in Celebration's design. For example, TCC-organized community events almost exclusively take place on Market Street and are connected to some sort of shopping experience, which places the 'community traditions' of Celebration firmly within a consumptive realm. Common consumerism is therefore central to the way 'historical' hometown events are produced.

The commodification (or market mediation) of historical memory is, in fact, one of the important cultural connecting points used to bring to life the increasing privatization of what was once broadly understood to be 'public domain' in Celebration's townscape. As such, Celebration presents a particularly poignant example of a larger movement towards the privately-oriented commodification of history and historical memory in late modernity as 'appropriate historical remembrance' is connected with serving the needs of those in positions of power in the present. Celebration's organization (which, as I have shown, is run on a business model) illustrates how those in elite positions (in the private sector – Disney in this case) have the ability to determine what and how historical memory will be negotiated in the 'public spaces' of the

territories they control. But what, I wonder, might some of the consequences of this commodification of memory be? One possible consequence of this, mentioned above, is that 'history' ultimately reflects the interests of socially dominant groups, leaving little space for alternate forms of remembrance. In Celebration this is apparent in the way the particular traditions of certain groups are used to stand in for 'American traditions' generally, and often at the expense of local priorities and cultural forms (the example of 'snow' on Market Street in December, featured on celebrationfl.com, is a material example of the way this works).

Interestingly, while Celebration's foray into community management appears to blur the distinctions between the 'public' and the 'private' in certain ways, the commodification of historical memory that itself *enables* Celebration is also connected with the way 'public' versus 'private' spaces are understood on dichotomous terms. As American 'traditions' and 'histories' are mediated by private interests and understood to be most productively embodied through the development projects of private companies, there is a re-articulation of public/private spatial dichotomy in the built environment. While this divide is articulated as a debate of almost moral dimensions - i.e. is cultural remembrance 'authentic' if it is mediated by private interests? – it re-inscribes the dichotomous understanding of Celebration as either a 'historical production' or a 'capitalist undertaking.' The underlying assumption is that Celebration must be either/or, but not both. This split, however, leads us away from thinking about how Celebration signifies, how it is negotiated and produced discursively across these two narratives.

For example, in terms of understanding the way the 'public' and 'private' are negotiated in Celebration: what was once understood to be a part of the 'public domain'

(a town) is privatized in Celebration, and what was once considered to be 'private' (home styles, decoration, personal aesthetic decoration of 'personal property,' and the participation in local traditions) is controlled in Celebration in the *name* of the public interest (i.e. TCC's covenants and the rigid social and aesthetic guidelines upheld by residents themselves). So, one might be prompted to ask, do the residents of Celebration actually 'own' their private homes or the wider community spaces they inhabit? In some ways I think this depends on how we conceive of 'ownership.' While residents do purchase the property their houses are built on, what residents are able to do with that property is extremely limited (based on the strict implementation of town covenants). In this sense, the 'private space' of the personal home is actually limited by public needs (i.e. aesthetic requirements), yet private interests (Disney) determine how these public spaces are structured and organized. In an ironic sense, the introduction of private town ownership serves to facilitate a type of 'communitarian space' (at least on aesthetic terms). We might further be prompted to ask: does the public have any ownership over the 'public spaces' of Celebration? Given the fact that TCC secretly sold the downtown to an investment company without consulting residents this does not seem to be the case. Obviously the split between 'public' and 'private' is a bit hazy. However, while the definitions of what counts as 'public' and 'private' spaces might be changing, the reinforcement of a strict dichotomous split remains (and is perpetuated through a historical resonance with the frontier myth). In other words, even as the borders themselves seem to be shifting, border patrol is on the rise. The way

Chat A:
"I thought it was the responsibility of all residents of Celebration to take in their trash cans after the collection had been made. It looks like many in the East Village either haven't gotten the message or don't care. Trash cans are left out ALL the time and never taken in. Can anything be done about this? Who should be informed... *It looks like a housing project sometimes in the alleys*"(34747.org/forum, 25/11/03 "Trash Cans," emphasis added).

'historical memory' is managed in the private sphere is important to the way these meanings have taken root in 'planning' and 'community-building' discourses that in fact enable Celebration's existence. The public/private debate is one of the principle axes upon which this dichotomous division becomes crystallized in the planning discourses that circulated around Celebration's association both with new urbanism and the Disney imagineering team.

Articulating one of the ways 'public' historical memory is managed in the 'private sphere,' Christine M. Boyer (1992), shows how collective memories are appropriated, managed, and produced in the development of *historical tableaux* located in 'recovered' older districts of large cities and small towns alike. Historical tableaux, she argues, are typically created (or re-fashioned) out of 'historical districts' such as seaports, boardwalks, main streets (etc) in an attempt to salvage and reinvigorate otherwise 'unusable' areas as shopping districts and tourist attractions[3]. These tableaux are generally organized into self-contained presentations where the 'past' in managed neatly in space and where the consumer imperatives and desires of the present can be accommodated in an aesthetically appealing environment. Boyer writes:

> On the surface of these tableaux, everything seems steeped in tradition. The way it was has supposedly become the way it is. Yet these nostalgic constructions only refer to history obliquely by appropriating styles of clothing, architectural environments, and furnishings to create a mood through which the past is filtered. These stylized tableaux, on one level, are self-conscious attempts to regain a centered world, to reestablish a mythical base on which American moral, political, and social traditions might stand… [these] tableaux link the past to the present through visual re-creations that gloss over real social change by capitalizing on the yearnings for lost innocence, heroic feats, adventures, explorations, and conquests. (190-191)

[3] While Boyer uses the example of the South Street Seaport in New York City in her analysis, some local Canadian examples that jump to mind for me are: the Old Port in Montreal, Grandville Island in Vancouver, and the Stephen Avenue Mall in Calgary (all of these 'historic districts' are located downtown, infused with ample shopping opportunities, and widely [and successfully] promoted as tourist attractions).

What these tableaux mask in their well-structured internal coherence, Boyer notes, is the generalized lack of coherence that falls outside their borders in the social spaces beyond the frames of the 'historic district,' reducing the 'past' in the city to a series of de-centered and checkered tourist attractions (192). Historical memory is indeed not specifically 'preserved,' as such, outside the specially set-aside spaces created to serve the particular purpose of housing the 'history' of the city. What results, Boyer notes, is that 'historical memories' are architecturally re-membered in patches, and these pockets reflect the interests and selective history lessons of those in the positions of power to have developed and articulated them as such in the first place; the developers, retailers, and commercial/tourist interests who participate in this 'preservation' therefore have a larger stake in what will be remembered, how, and to what ends (189-199). 'History' in urban space, in other words, is organized into what I would call 'patterns of manicured memory' (observed in the historic tableaux) interspersed with patches of 'void/forgetfulness' (which is everything else in between); but as Boyer shows, what counts as either 'worthy of preserving' or 'better left ignored' is politically determined and has to be institutionally reinforced both by governments and private investors.

Celebration reflects this 'tableaux-ization' of social/physical space. Instead of building on/over an older area, however, architects and designers have undertaken the project of building-in a history of America into Celebration from scratch. What results is that Celebration's aesthetic logic mimics historical tableaux in cities that contrast the legitimate 'historical spaces' (as defined by city planners who identify and set-aside appropriate spaces for tableaux) with the simply 'old,' unattended and run-down areas in-between. Celebration presents what is essentially a brand-new suburban development as

a 'historical community' in contrast to the undesirable *disorganization* and *neglect* of suburban sprawl and/or urban decay observed in the surrounding area. Celebration locates the memory of Small Town USA in a particular suburb outside Orlando while cordoning it off as a special 'hometown of yesteryear' that is advertised as 'better' and somehow 'more real' than other urban developments that have not been tailored to make such a historicized claim. What the example of Celebration seems to suggest in relation to the historical tableaux that Boyer describes, is that 'remembering' in the public sphere is something best mediated by design professionals, tourism bureaus, retail chains and restaurant owners looking to invigorate urban spaces with an eye to creating appealing and lucrative new locations to set up shop. History does not 'just happen,' to put it another way, but is linked-in with broader cultural productions and economic forces. 'History' oftentimes finds itself housed in the spaces of pedestrian malls or other consumer spaces (into which Market Street in Celebration certainly fits), but it is unclear how/if 'history' can be conceived of in disconnection from these processes/spaces of representation.

What Disney's soft-peddled images of 'history' and 'American tradition' mask, especially in relation to Celebration, are the bleaker realities of current and past social inequalities. Appealing to the open and friendly 'traditional neighborhood design' of Celebration and, in particular, the underlying scaffolding for such design strategies, serves to disguise the "hard reality of administered space" (Christopherson 1994: 409). Celebration, in its self-promotion on celebrationfl.com, does not invite the development of 'American community' in just *any* form, but in a very *particular* one; the town is accessible only to citizens who fit into the consumptive model of 'the American Family'

in the privatized-public-space that Disney endorses. To state this issue in broader terms, the 'public spaces' of the new urban frontier generally exist only insofar as the 'public' is always-already defined by those in control of the particular 'public spaces' in question.

The relationship between the corporate mediation of our built environment leaves me wondering more deeply about the relationship between democracy and 'public' social spaces in general. An important point to reflect on, as Christopherson argues, is not whether a particular designed space is "authentic or inauthentic, but how its material form and our experience in it influence our ideas, say, of what it means to be a citizen" (1994: 413). How indeed *do* collective interests get played out in so-called 'public spaces' such as privatized towns? Are we in fact experiencing what Steven Flusty (1997: 51) refers to as an era of post-public space? What might 'public space' signify on the new frontier? And how is the private/public dichotomy made operational by the shifting relationships between corporate ownerships of urban spaces and the interests and desires of powerful consumer groups (like homeowner's associations)? Furthermore, how might non-consumers negotiate these unfolding privatized-public dynamics, and with what consequences to the status quo? As communities like Celebration continue to reflect the changing patterns of the American housing landscape, the relationship between the negotiation of historical memory and the privatization of public space brings these questions into sharp relief.

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Appendix A

Internet Links to Relevant Images

1. Norman Rockwell's paintings:
   http://www.art-prints-posters-books.com/Norman-Rockwell.htm

2. The Official Celebration Website:
   http://www.celebrationfl.com/

3. TCC's 2003 "Now Snowing Nightly" Snowman:
   http://www.celebrationfl.com/Events%202003/Now%20Snowing/Main-%20Flyer/Now%20Snowing%20Nightly%20Main.htm

4. Photograph of Family at "Now Snowing Nightly" event:
   http://www.icsc.org/srch/maxi1999/maxi15.html

5. 34747.org's Current Photo Gallery:
   http://www.34747.org/

6. 34747.org Photo Annex:
   http://www.zazzle.com/contributors/products/gallery/browse_results.asp?cid=238459159017948352

7. Celebration's Architecture Featured on the Website of Dr. Andrew Wood:
   http://www2.sjsu.edu/faculty/wooda/celebrationphotos/